

# AITHIHYAMALA

◆ The Garland of Legends ◆

by

KOTTARATHIL SANKUNNY





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Translated by  
Rukmini Sekhar

Illustrated by  
Subir Roy



**VIVALOK COMICS**



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**Subir Roy** graduated in Applied Art from the Government College of Art, Calcutta. He has contributed extensively to several children's publications in India and abroad. He was invited to participate in a workshop conducted by the Asian Cultural Centre for UNESCO in Tokyo in 1984. He got a special jury mention in the Biennale of Illustrators (BIB) held in Bratislava for his picture book, *The Woman and the Crow*. He has also worked for UNICEF. Presently he is working as Art Executive with the Children's Book Trust, Delhi.

**Rukmini Sekhar** has been writing, editing, translating and publishing for the last fifteen years. She is deeply committed to alternatives in human and social development and her interests cover a wide range of issues. She was founder-editor of *THE EYE* magazine and is currently director of The Viveka Foundation.



About our mascot – the mascot of Vivalok Comics is called Roama. She is a curious and vivacious eighteen-year old girl, fond of travelling and adventure. She is passionate about folklore and keeps recording her experiences with Dicti, her friend the dictaphone.

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# the world of comics

Comics is often thought of as the joining of two art forms: writing and drawing. But what happens between the panels isn't about either, it's the author's imagination.'

Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics*

Comics are visual narratives which successfully tap the unexplored realms of imagination among all its readers, children and adult alike.

Comics have had a turbulent history so far. Besides raising the value of imagination and proclaiming the triumph of the good and the beautiful, they have also faced accusations of being frivolous, unclean, dark and negative. But that would be a criticism of the content and not the medium. Comics have been indomitably resilient and have a way of rising from the ashes every time they have been proclaimed dead! What's kept them alive are their sheer reading pleasure and their place as social commentators, mixing information with imagination. Their relevance, equally to young and old, cannot be denied.

The medium defies the logical style of narration and provides scope for broadened horizons and unlimited perceptions. Which of us has been left unaffected by the magical world of superheroes — Batman, Superman, Captain America and Mandrake the Magician? Or the mischief of Dennis the Menace, the cynicism of Calvin, the laziness of Garfield, the confrontations between the Romans and a group of Gauls led by Asterix, or the adventures of Tintin? The list is endless. We all have mentally mimicked the world of these characters, which though unreal, provided an insight into the real world.

Comics are now viewed as the unfolding of alternative spaces. From 1865, when the first comic strip *Max und Moritz* was introduced in German papers, upto the 1960's, which experienced a 'dark' phase in comic history, this art form has covered many milestones. Besides projecting a lopsided and humorous view of life through lovable and unforgettable characters, it raised issues on terrorism, human rights, anarchism, racism and sexual politics. Art Spiegelman's legendary holocaust creation, *Maus*, shook the world and won the Pulitzer Prize.

It was in the US that the comic form flourished. Joe Sacco, another legend, catapulted comics into the mainstream definition of acceptable reading. *The Times* published his strips regularly. But it was Robert Crumb who initiated and popularised a whole new genre in comics- 'underground comics'. He did a lifetime of work on the American way of life. His (much too) honest depiction of reality and his subversive brand of humour won him as many accolades as criticism.

According to McCloud, comics, or story telling through visuals, have an older history than

what is commonly believed. He says, "Comics is about three thousand years old and maybe as old as art itself." Some examples, though they adopted a different style, are ancient Egyptian wall paintings on domes and the walls of ancient Indian temples, such as the murals of Kerala.

Over five hundred years ago, there were European broadsheets that were more contemporary in form and narrated events in pictures. European comics were the first to make an impression and each nation had its own little term of endearment for the comic. In France, they used the term 'BDs' or 'Bandes Dessinees', as a term for drawn strips. The Italians called them 'fumetti' or 'little smokes' because the blurbs looked like little smoke clouds.

It was from France, however, that the next international comic wave began. Georges Remi's *Tintin* and Goscinny and Uderzo's group of indomitable Gauls led by Asterix, Obelix and Getafix the Druid, hit the readers' imagination in such a way as to give a whole new meaning to comics. The Europeans also blazed a new trail in science fiction and historical portrayals.

Almost parallel to these developments in comics was the evolution of Japanese comics ('Manga'). The emergence of Tetsuwan Atom (1951) created by Tezuka set the ball rolling with one of the best loved science fiction comics with a robot like character. This interesting representation of a super hero who fought for peace is best known as 'Astro Boy'. Apart from science fiction, Japanese comics lent themselves well to thrillers and underground comics. In the 80's Kiji Nakazawa's *General of Hiroshima*, a vivid, thought provoking autobiographical work once again brought out the maturity of style in the Japanese Manga.

In the Indian context, comics are but a logical continuation of the strong pictorial and narrative tradition that it already has. The 'pata chitras' or scroll paintings of Bengal and the 'phad' of Rajasthan exemplify this. Both these techniques combine the excitement of both the oral and visual form of story telling. Anant Pai who started the *Amar Chitra Katha* series made the first successful foray in this domain. Comics, he proved, were worthy of narrating sacred epics like the *Mahabharata*, the *Ramayana* and other mythological tales. In the sixties and seventies, *Indrajal Comics* brought to the Indian doorstep almost every favourite comic world character.

Today, there is a growing movement of comic book lovers who are trying to inject new life into this wonderful art form.





# Aithiyamala

*Aithiyamala* or *The Garland of Legends* is one of the most popular books to come out of Kerala, the southernmost state of India. Written in Malayalam in the early decades of this century, these fascinating legends began to get compiled and published in book form in 1909. Kottarathil Sankunni was both compiler and narrator of these legends.

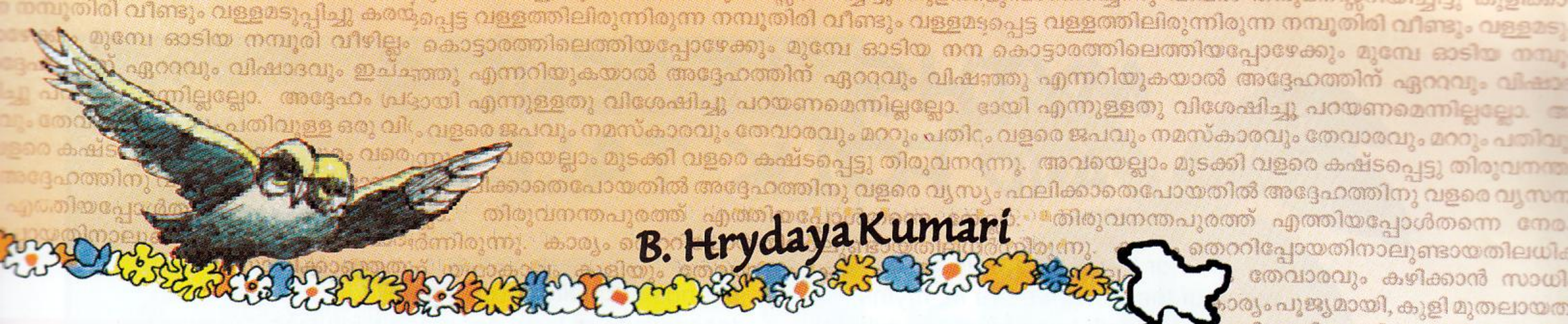
Sankunni was born in 1854 in Kottayam, southern Kerala. For Kerala, the nineteenth century was a period of calm continuity with the past, whereas the twentieth brought in social, political and economic changes almost like an avalanche. Sankunni seems to have been encapsulated in the past, his literary taste that of a neo-classicist of the nineteenth century and his attitude to life, that of an old fashioned, orthodox Hindu. The only indication we get of his keeping pace with changing times was his association with Europeans and Christians.

Kottarathil Sankunni belonged to an upper caste Hindu family of Ambalavasis or temple functionaries who were orthodox and ritualistic. Well versed in Sanskrit and Malayalam, many of them were ayurvedic physicians, astrologers and magic-practitioners. This background explains why Kottarathil Sankunni's *Garland of Legends* is all about temples and their deities. Most of them involve Namboodiris or Malayali brahmins and their miraculous attainments, and about so many matters associated with Hindu life.

*Aithiyamala* is all about Kerala's "storied" past. Story is a blanket term, including mythological tales, epic lore, supernatural and magical legends, heroic tales, animal fables, parables and anecdotes. This rich heritage comes down partly through literature and partly through the oral tradition of folklore. Local deities, beliefs and rituals have shown tough powers of survival, presence and even creativity. The pan-Indian sanskritic traditions have not been able to oust them. The great (sanskritic) goddess is identified with Amman, the local goddess. A net of deep psychological processes link the past with the present, the great Indian with the local, the collective psyche with the individual. And folklore is the language of the psyche at some of its deeper levels and more creative moments.







# B. Hrydaya Kumari

Sankunny was not a folklorist in the strict sense of the term. He was more of a *sahrdaya*, delighting in stories and storing them up for other people's delight. He was not aware perhaps of the literary, sociological, and psychological implications, and pauses often in the course of narration to announce a moral with a pertinent remark or adorn a tale with an ethical comment.

Sankunny, whose legends concerned mostly Namboodiris, is keenly interested in tales of the supernatural and the legendary feats of Namboodiri magicians, in the stories of maharajas and other chieftains, in the brave doings of heroes and elephants. The temple-centered routine of his upper caste Hindu life was so self-contained and so full of variety that he hardly ever stepped out of his own community to explore other worlds.

Some of the tales are historical like that of Arakkal Bibi, and some have their place in the borderland between fact and fiction, the comic and the serious. The commonsense and expertise of celebrated ayurvedic physicians are as exciting as the elephant stories where Sankunny's affection for them almost humanises them.

*Aithiyamala* presents a world of medieval Hinduism extending down to the present. Its values are those of devotion and worship, its clock the sound of the temple conch, its calendar not so much of days and dates as of the rising and setting of stars and the waxing and waning of the moon and the festivals of temples. It is a serene world but not without excitement and drama and a mellow earthy humour.

Prof. B. Hrydaya Kumari is a noted scholar, writer and activist. She taught English Literature at the Women's College, Thiruvananthapuram, till her recent retirement. This note is extracted from a larger article written by her.





# MYTHS, LEGENDS AND FOLK TALES

For those who want to make sense of the world we are in, myths, legends and folk tales offer rich cultural resources of existential help. These three different genres can be grouped under the larger umbrella of 'folklore'. According to the well-known folklorist, A.K.Ramanujan, "wherever people live there is folklore."

Myths are not about gods and goddesses as they are normally perceived to be. They deal with impossible life situations that are part of the human predicament. Accidents, unnatural births and deaths, nature's fury, the relationship between character and destiny, good and evil, conflicts in unjust societies, human action and supernatural designs, origin of events, places, objects, species and ideas about the cosmos, are some of the recurrent themes of Indian myths. Given the intensity of such themes, only gods and goddesses can sometimes unravel these formidable issues. Pan Indian myths share ritual and festival calendars with highly varying regional, local and village temple myths. Major Indian festivals, belief systems, temple ceremonies, life cycle ceremonies, ritual components and behavioural patterns within rituals depend on what myths say. The major corpus of pan Indian Hindu myths contains eighteen major divisions, and their millions of variations and versions have led to the creation of exquisite temple architecture, stone and bronze sculptures, music and dance. Jain and Buddhist myths also have a pan Indian character with regional variations in architecture, sculpture, ritual and life cycle ceremonies. Indian tribal myths address the same set of issues but they do not share anything with the pan Indian myths.

Legends are historical chronicles, not necessarily authenticated, of local heroes, antiheroes and their heroic deeds. The local heroes of legends could be bandits, chieftains, caste and clan leaders and their heroic deeds could be winning a local battle or getting a cowherd

from a rival group. Indian legends normally contain detailed descriptions of local geography, infusing places with historical meaning. Forts, monuments, gathering places, courses of rivers, mysteries of thick forests, mountain terrains, secret spots in the ocean, navigating the deserts, animal behavior and man's struggles against nature, form the corpus of Indian legends. The heroic values embedded in the legends are often communicated through various folk forms, and over a long passage of time legends blur into myths.

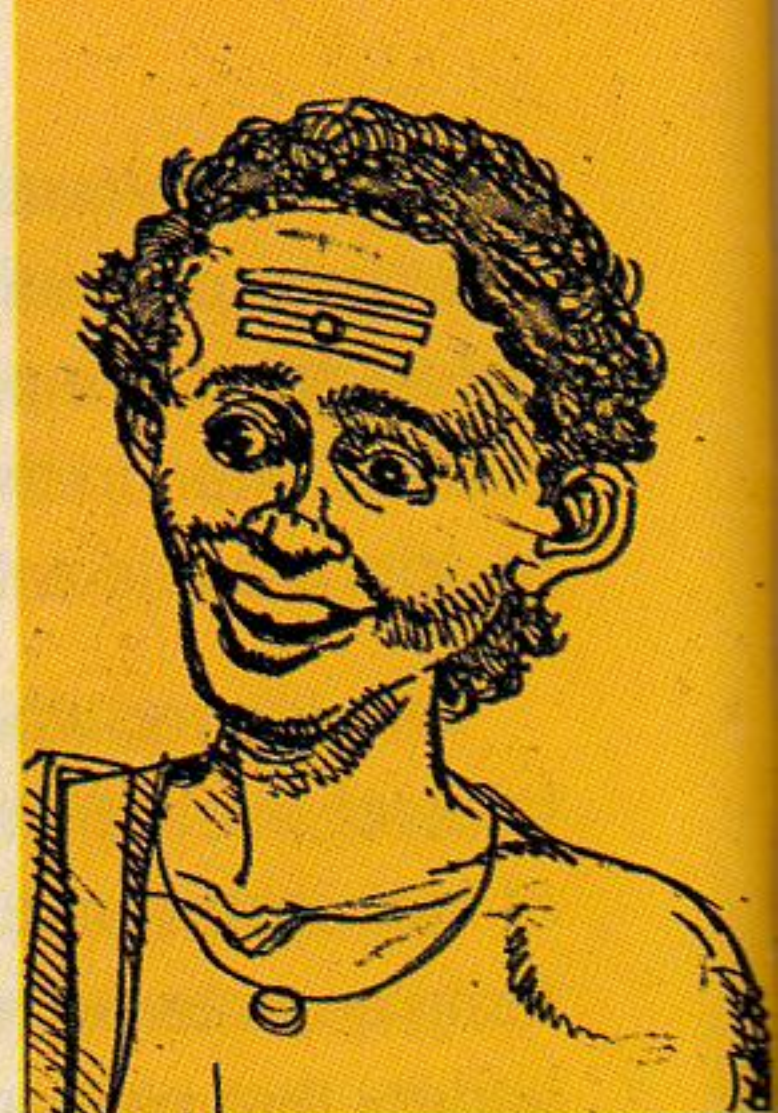
Folk tales are about everyday life. Mundane, earthy and honest negotiations that they are, their meanings are best found in their original contexts. The telling of a tale warrants a situation. Situations create versions of tales. So any tale at any given point is always retold. With every retelling, tales travel—across generations, languages and regions. They are like floating magic carpets which entertain, educate, fret, fume, take vengeance or amuse. They reveal politics of kinship and inter-community relationships in a particular region. We learn the natures of mothers, fathers, brothers, various in-laws, sons, daughters and grand parents from folk tales much more than contemporary psychology would reveal. Through folk tales we understand the roles of brahmins, fakirs, sadhus, astrologers, magicians, kings, clowns, fairies and genies and various animals. Could we have made sense of the world in this manner without folk tales? Folk tales also generate proverbs and riddles.

It is important to understand the general functions of myths, legends and folk tales in our society so that we appreciate their particular contexts. The ultimate challenge is not about making folklore accessible but it is about making 'folklore in context' accessible to audiences. And that is what this series intends to do.

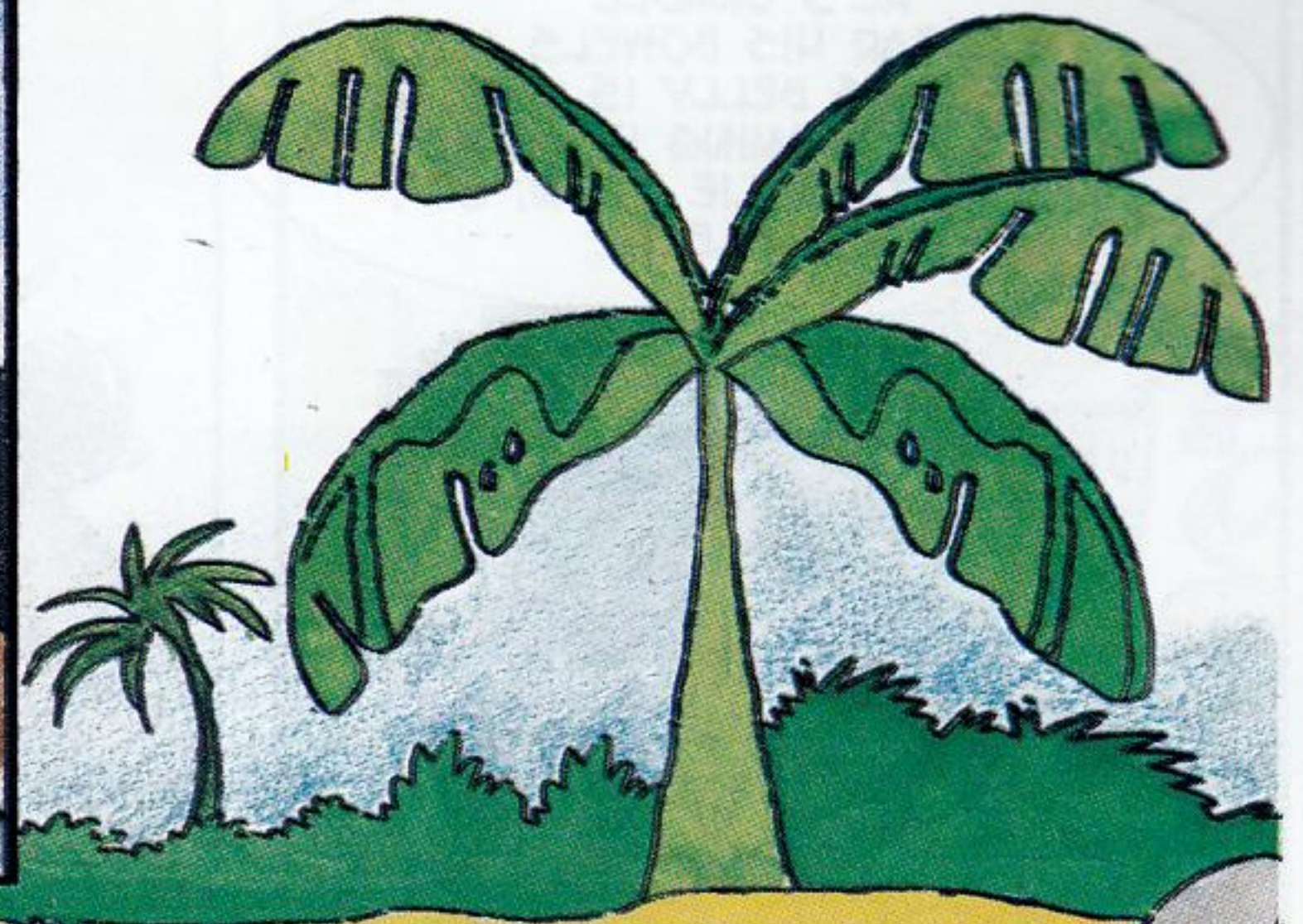
M.D.Muthukumaraswamy.

National Folklore Support Centre, Chennai

The NFSC is dedicated to the promotion of Indian folklore research, training, networking and publications.







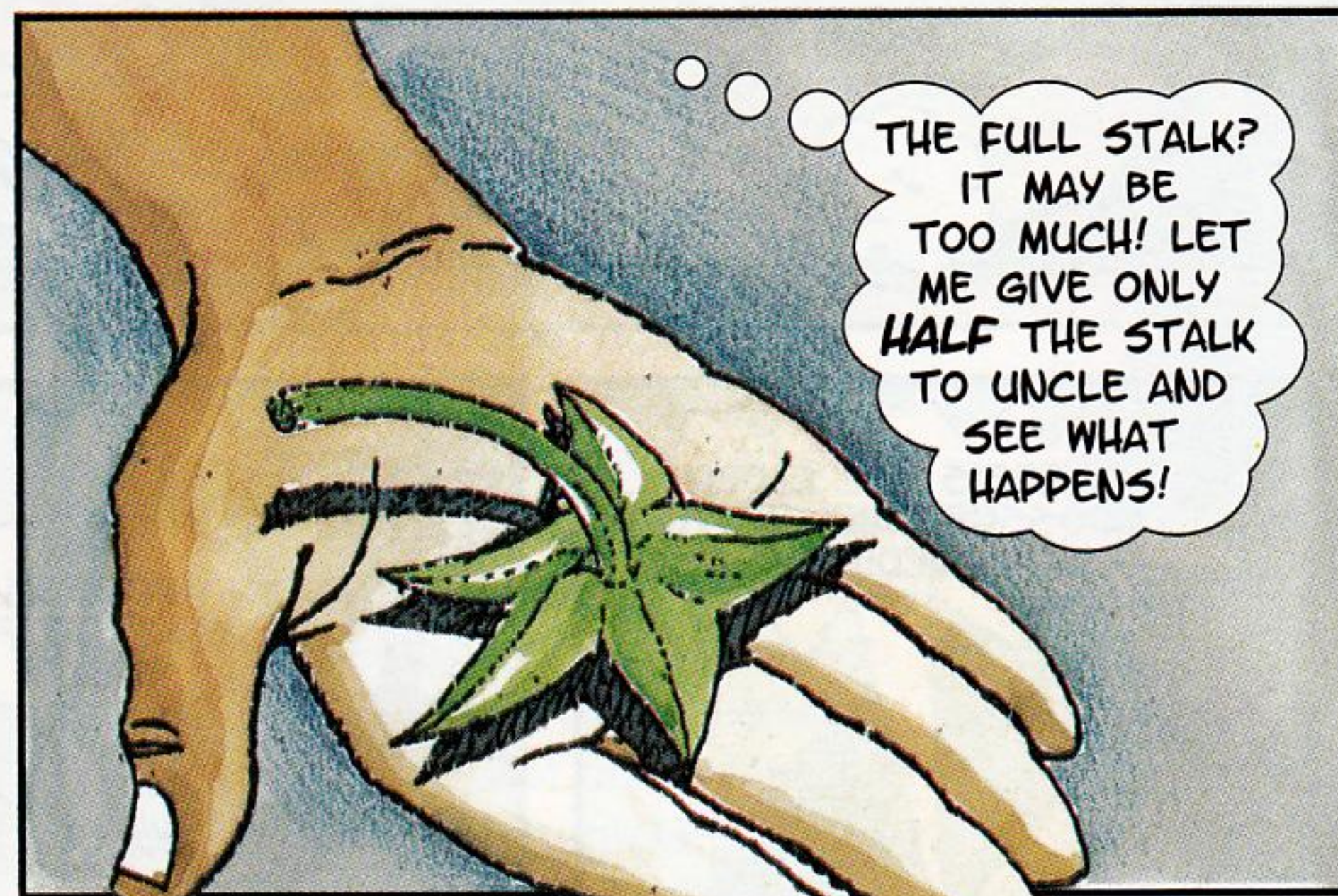
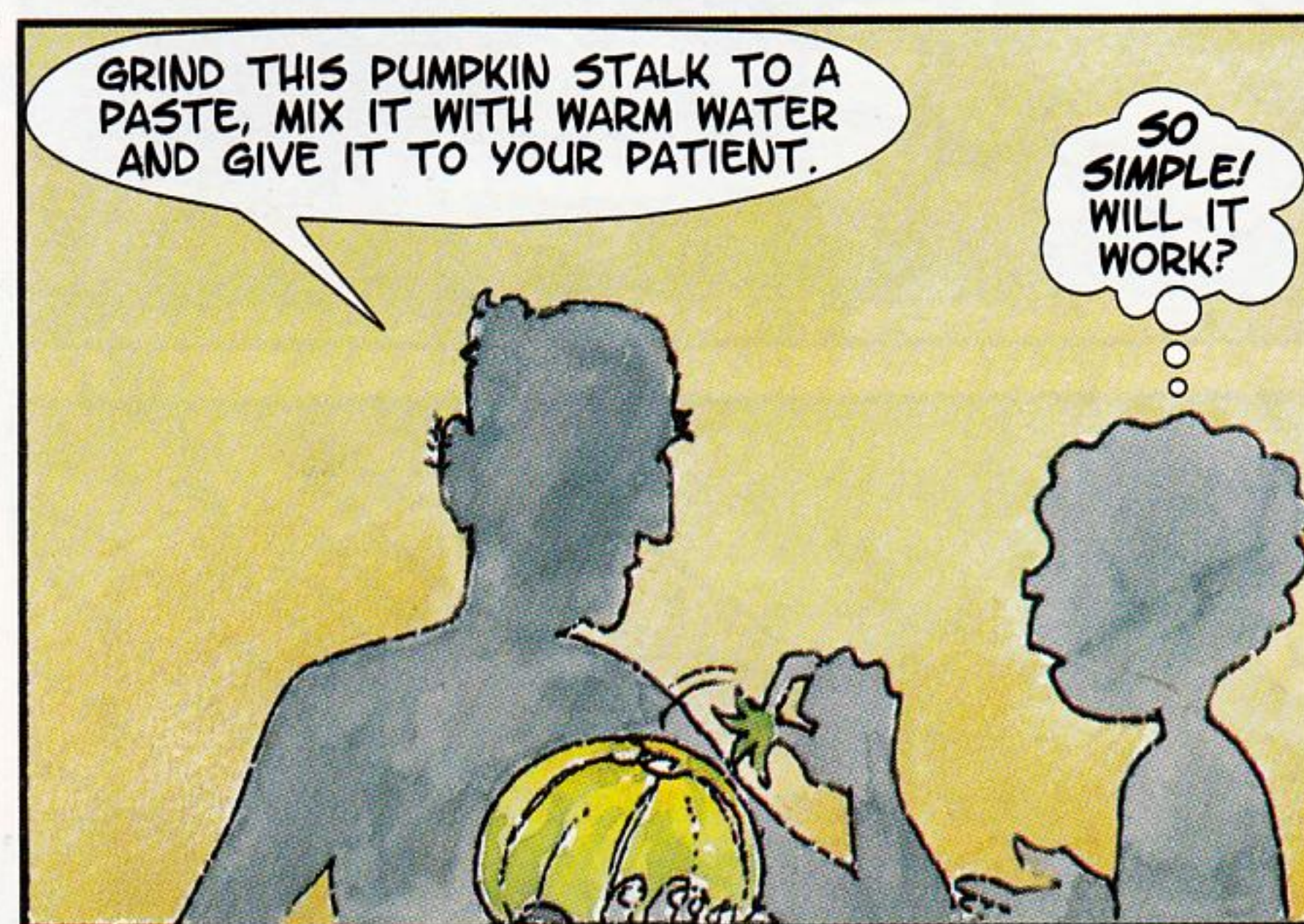
## THE ELDER MOOSSU OF VAYAKKARA

IT IS A WELL KNOWN FACT THAT WHAT A VAIDYAN<sup>1</sup> NEEDS MOST ARE THE BLESSINGS OF HIS GURUS AND A SPECIAL GRACE THAT ENDOWS HIM WITH A HEALING TOUCH. BUT WHAT IF HE IS A GREAT SCHOLAR AND ALSO BLESSED WITH THESE SPECIAL QUALITIES? THEN SURELY IT BECOMES LEGEND. OF ALL THE EIGHT FAMOUS VAIDYAN FAMILIES, THE VAYAKKARA MOOSSU FAMILY, SINCE THE OLDEN DAYS, ENJOYED A UNIQUE REPUTATION BEING FULLY POSSESSED OF ALL THE FINE ATTRIBUTES OF TRADITIONAL LEARNING AND HARD COMMONSENSE.

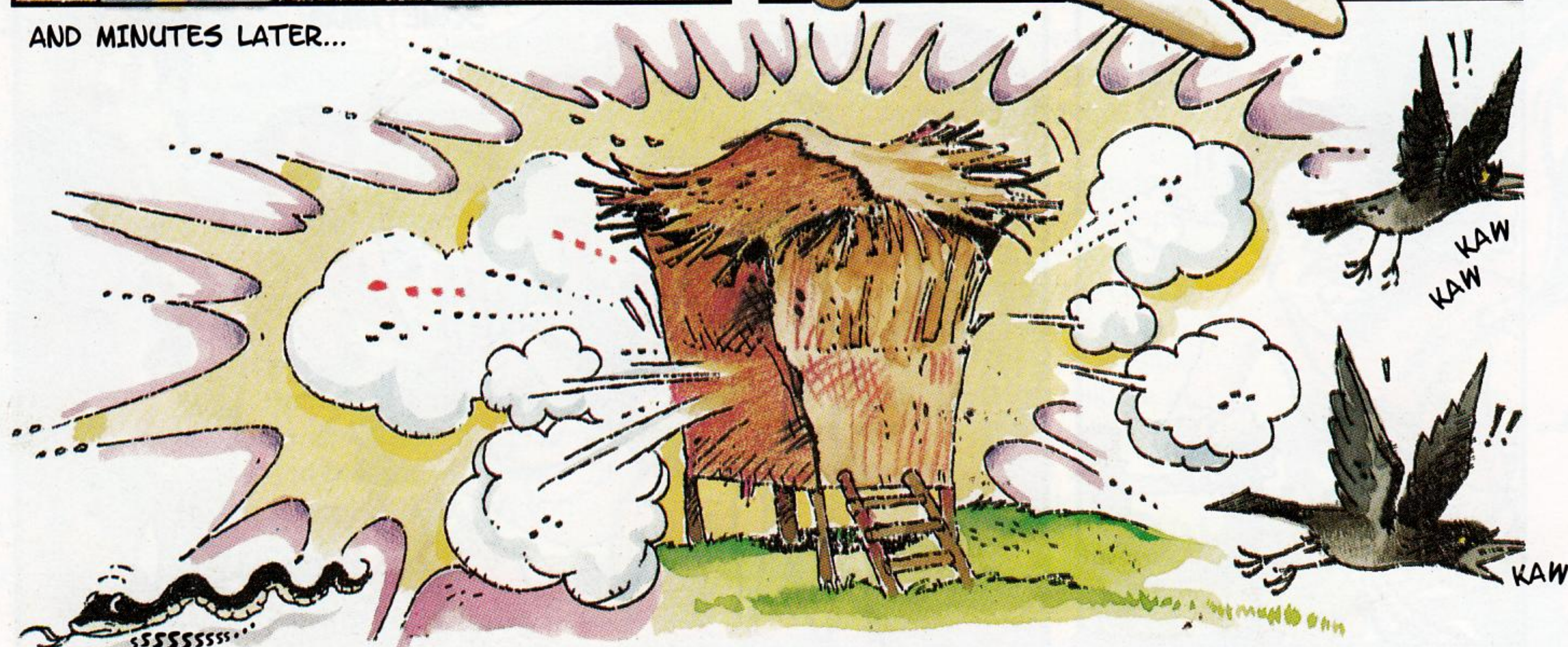


1. A doctor of indigenous medicine like Ayurveda

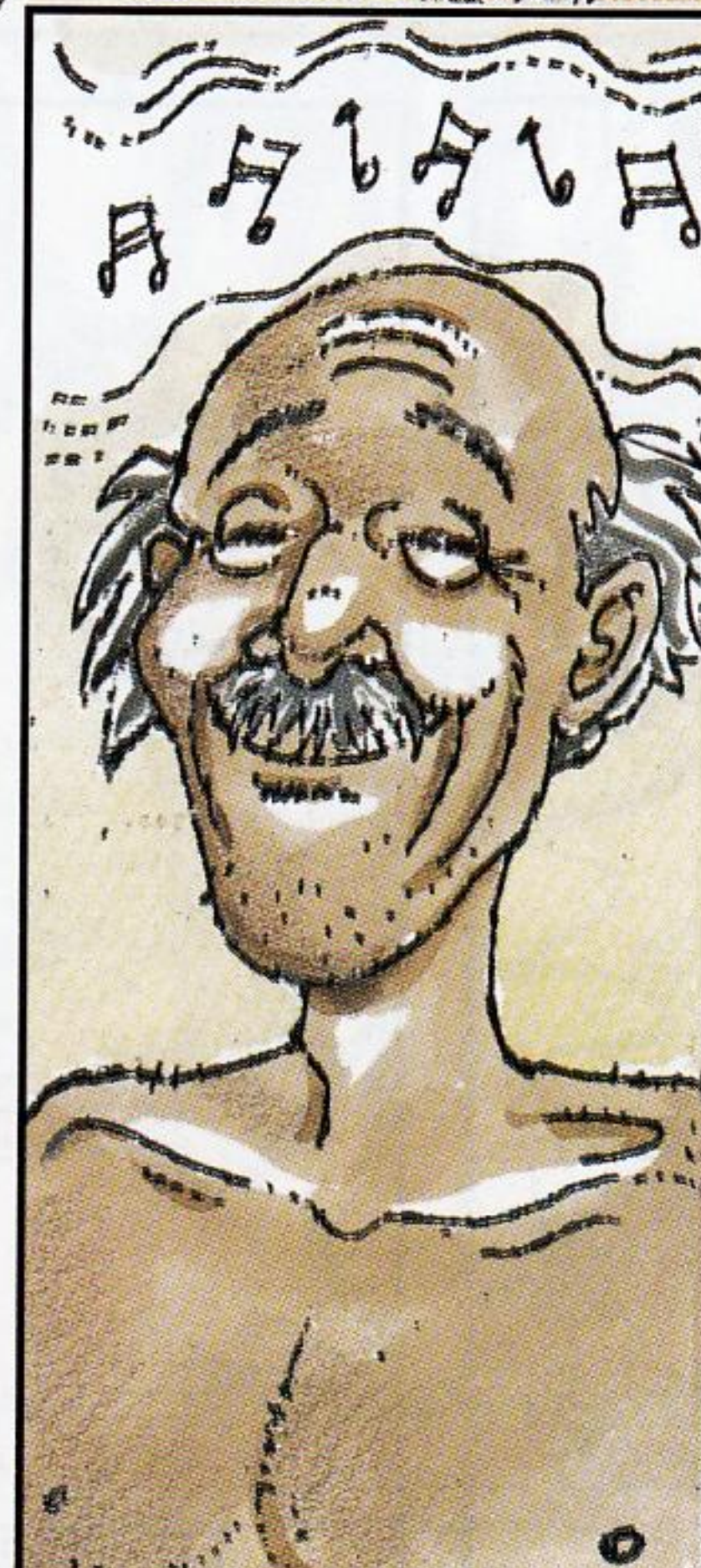
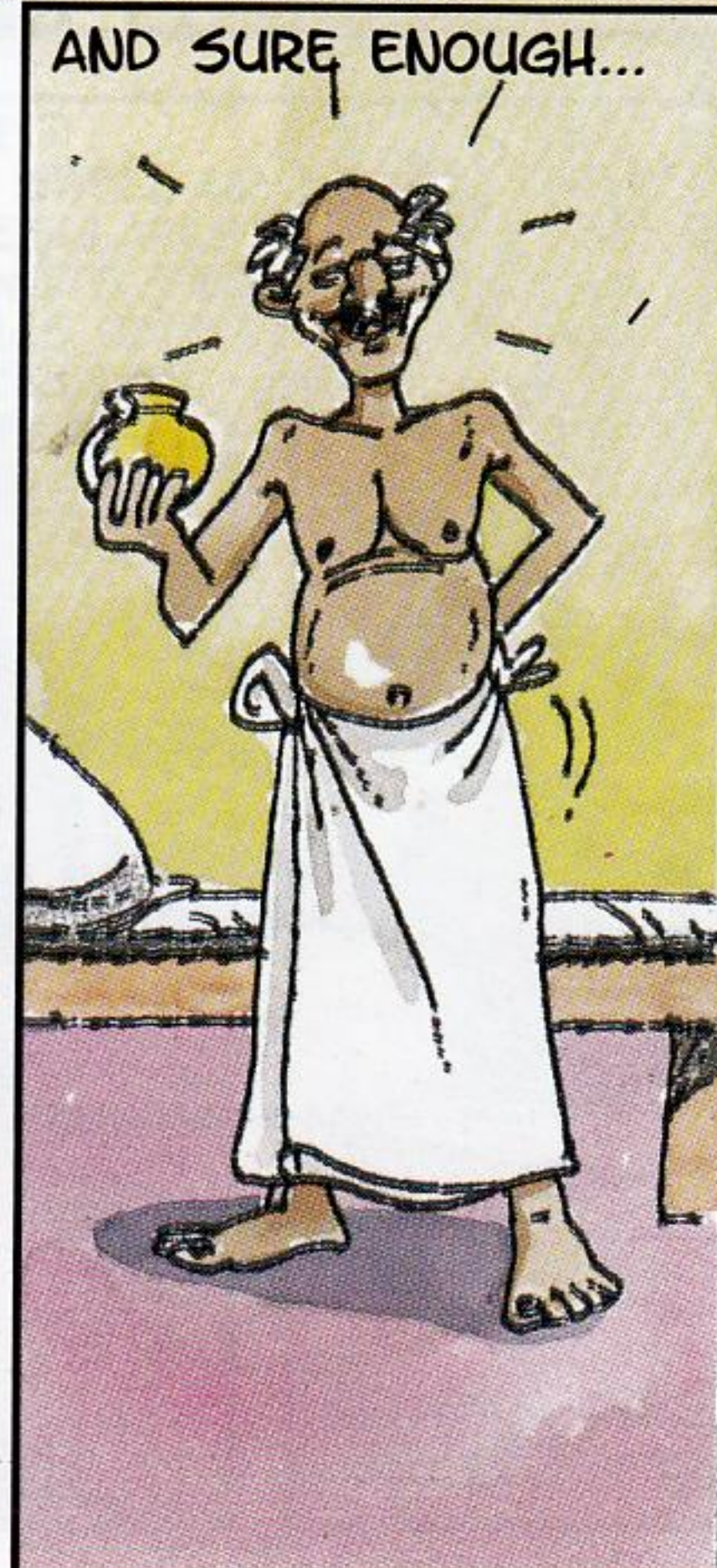
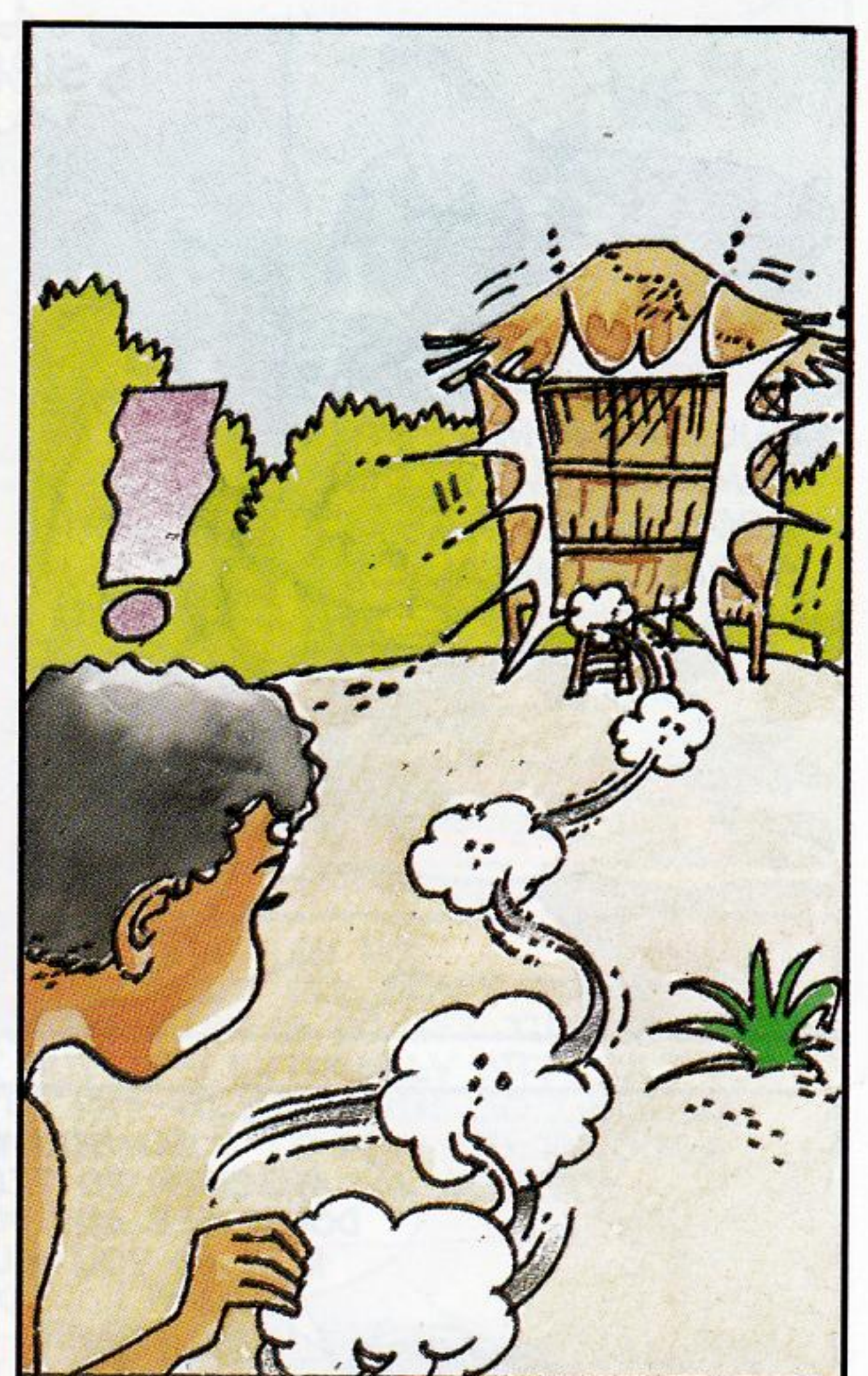
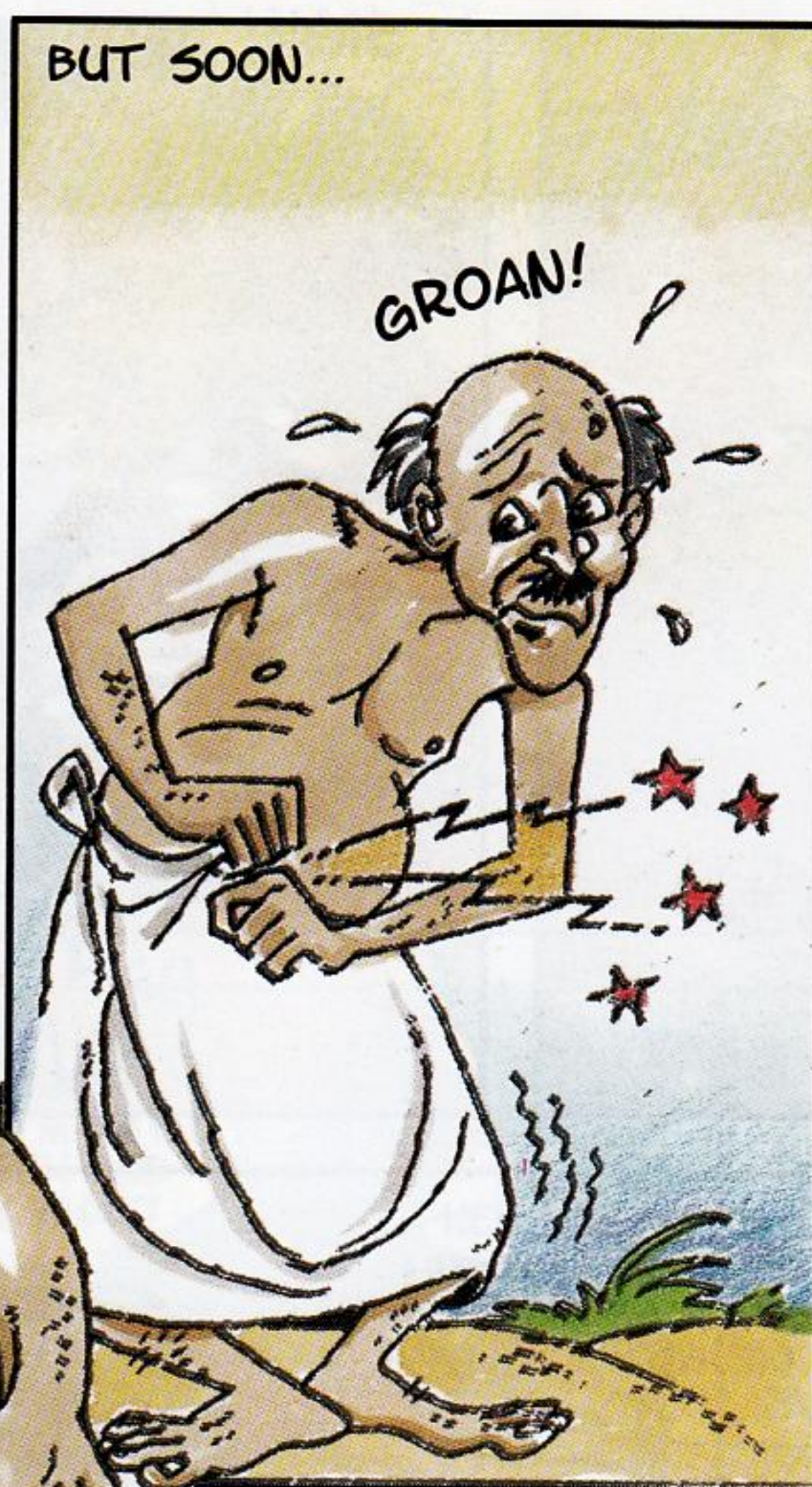
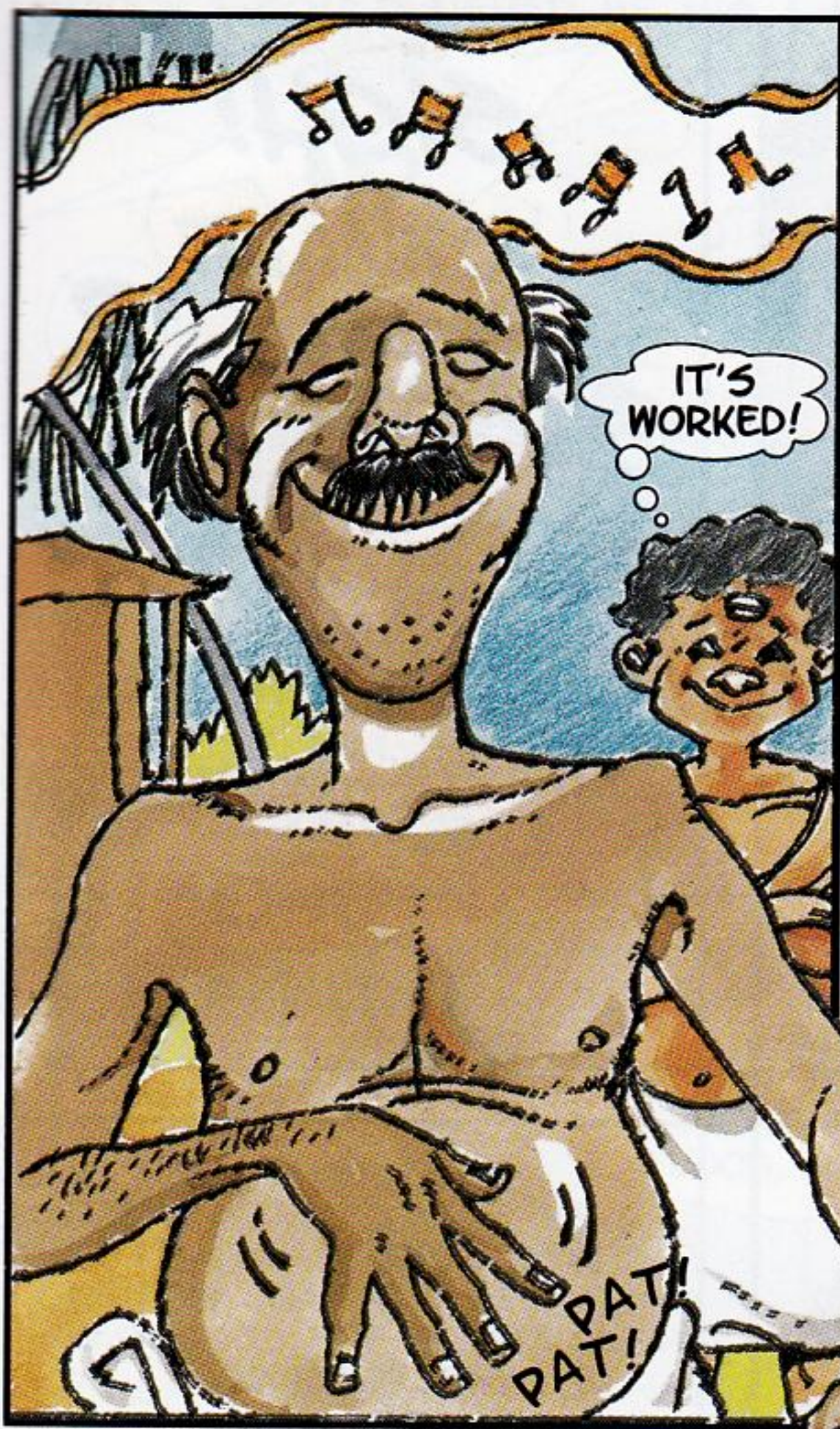




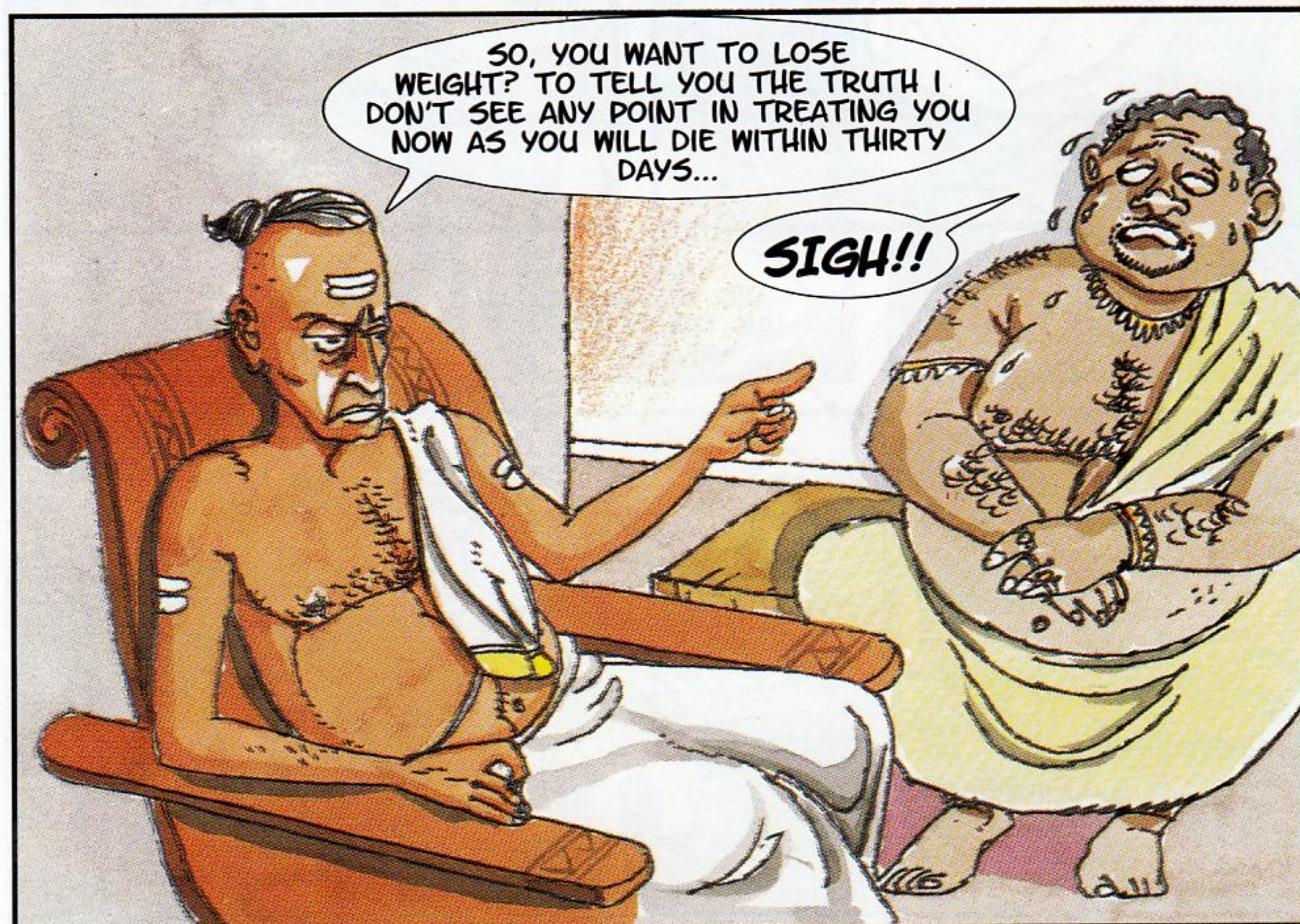
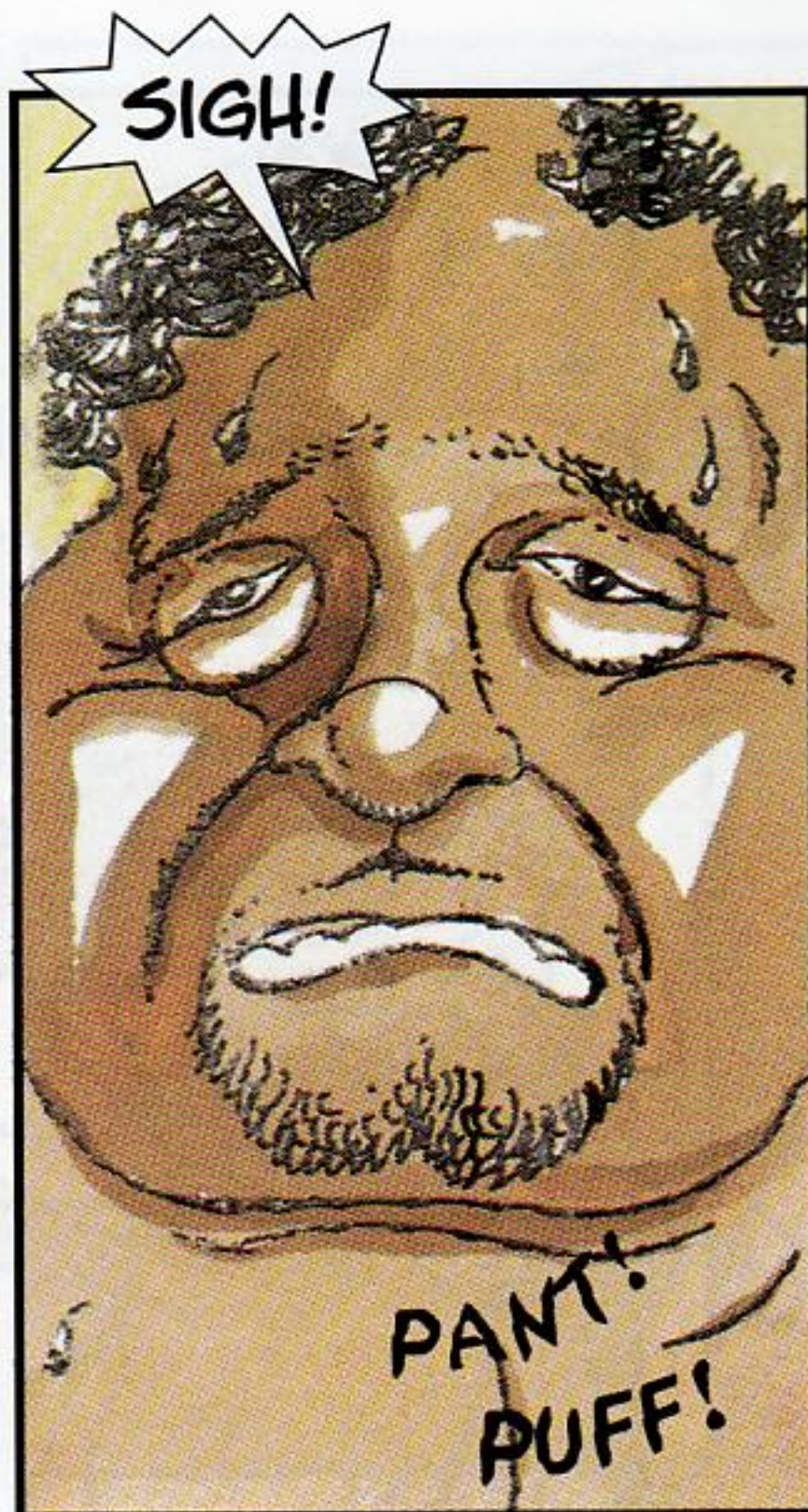
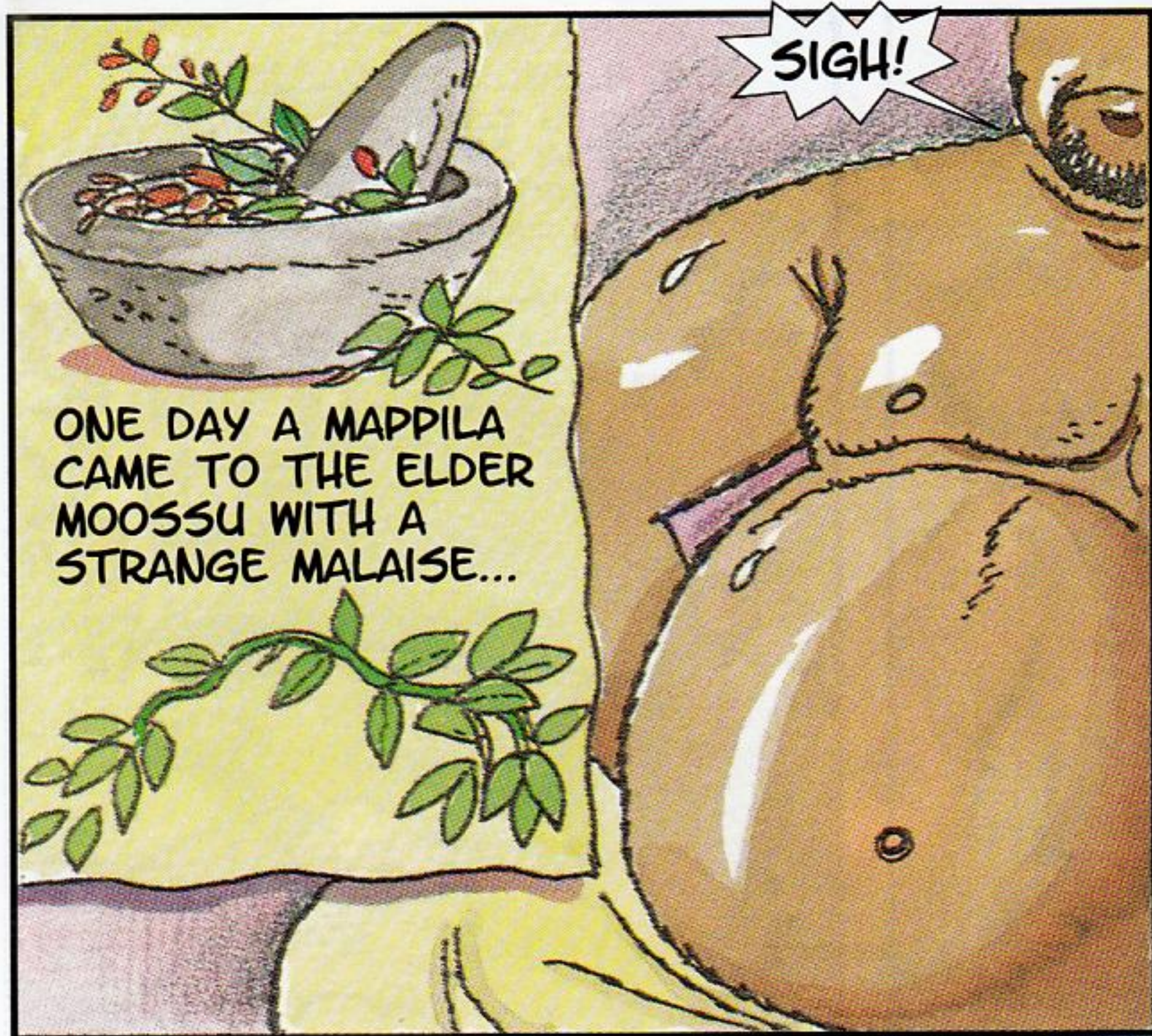
AND MINUTES LATER...













MAPPILA COULD NEVER BE HIS OLD SELF AGAIN...

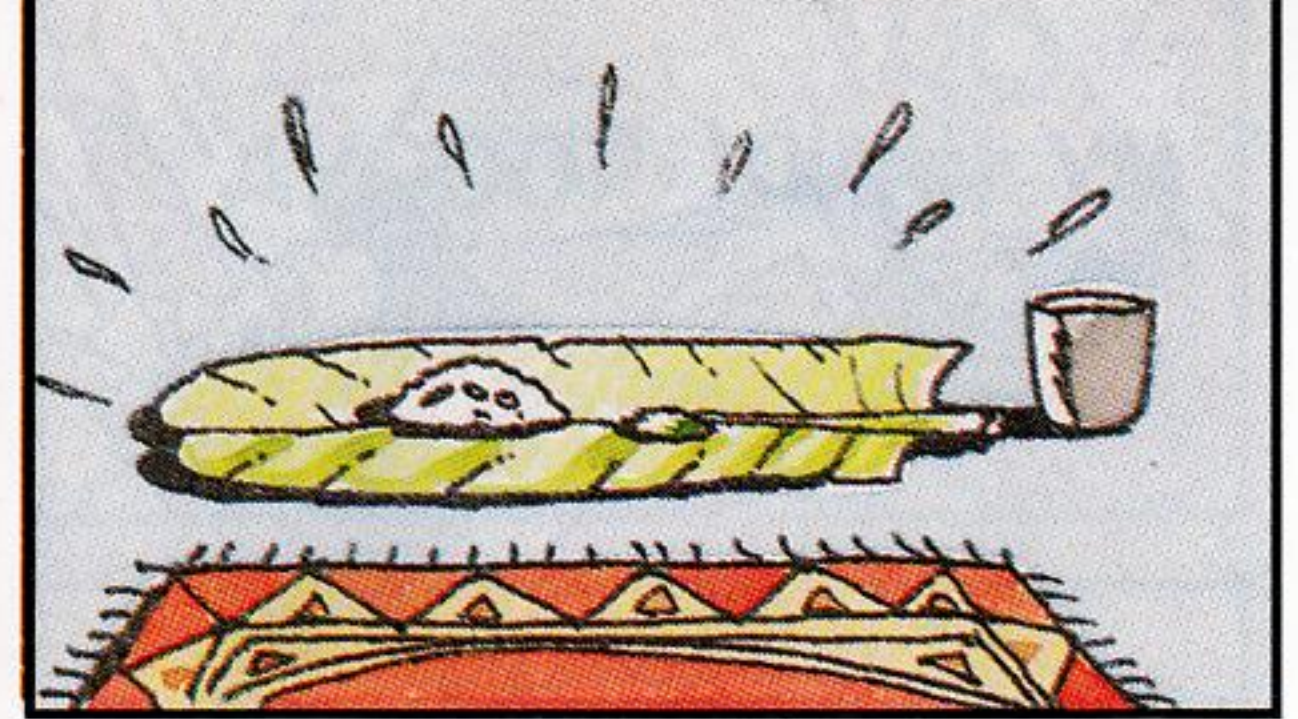
**NO  
THANKS!**



**NO!**



**NO!**



AFTER A MONTH...

A MONTH HAS GONE BY AND I'M STILL ALIVE IN FLESH AND BLOOD, NOW WHAT!

HMM  
HEH HEH!



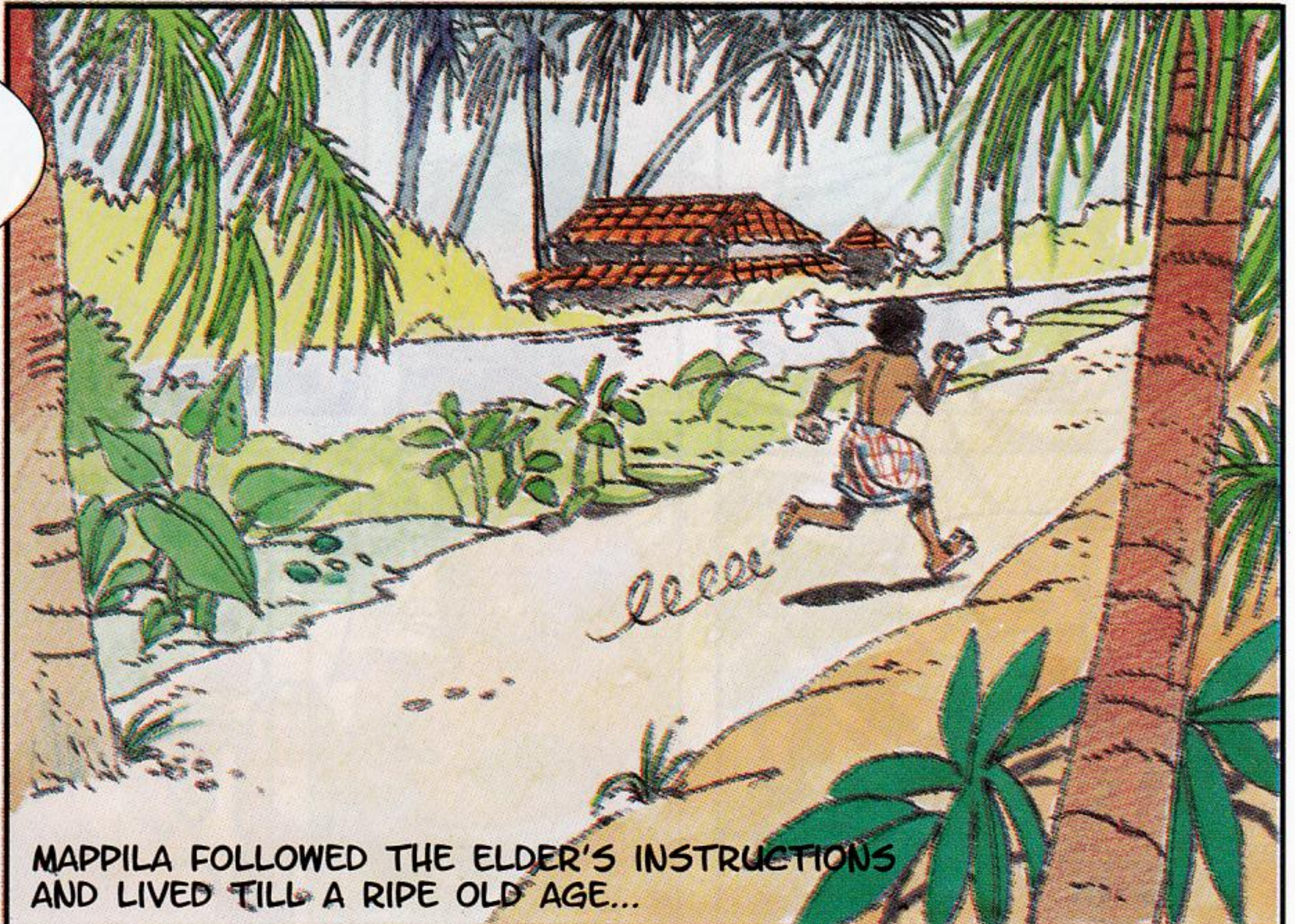
OH NO, YOU WON'T DIE, DON'T WORRY. THERE ARE WAYS TO GET THIN PEOPLE FAT BUT IT'S EXTREMELY DIFFICULT FOR THE FAT TO GET THIN. SO I HAD NO OPTION BUT TO PUT YOU THROUGH SEVERE MENTAL ANXIETY.

I WANTED TO MAKE YOU EAT LITTLE OR NOTHING. WORRY IS THE BEST WAY TO LOSE WEIGHT, SO WHAT I TOLD YOU A MONTH AGO WAS MY TREATMENT!  
**HEH HEH!**

**EH?!!**



AND IT WORKED, DIDN'T IT? NOW SEE THAT YOU DON'T SWELL UP LIKE BEFORE. EXERCISE REGULARLY TILL YOU BREAK INTO A SWEAT. TOO MUCH MONEY AND FOOD HAS MADE YOU SLOPPY. NOW DISCIPLINE YOURSELF, DO YOU HEAR?



MAPPILA FOLLOWED THE ELDER'S INSTRUCTIONS AND LIVED TILL A RIPE OLD AGE...



AND THEN THERE'S THE STORY OF THE LADY WHO STRETCHED HER LEFT HAND TO GET SOMETHING FROM THE TOP OF THE CUPBOARD...

OH!  
MY HAND!

WHAT ABOUT YOUR  
HAND MY DEAR?!

CAN'T YOU SEE?  
IT WON'T COME DOWN! STOP READING  
THAT NEWSPAPER AND HELP ME!!!  
Ayyooooo...

I BETTER  
GET SOME HELP QUICK!!

I RECOMMEND A MASSAGE!

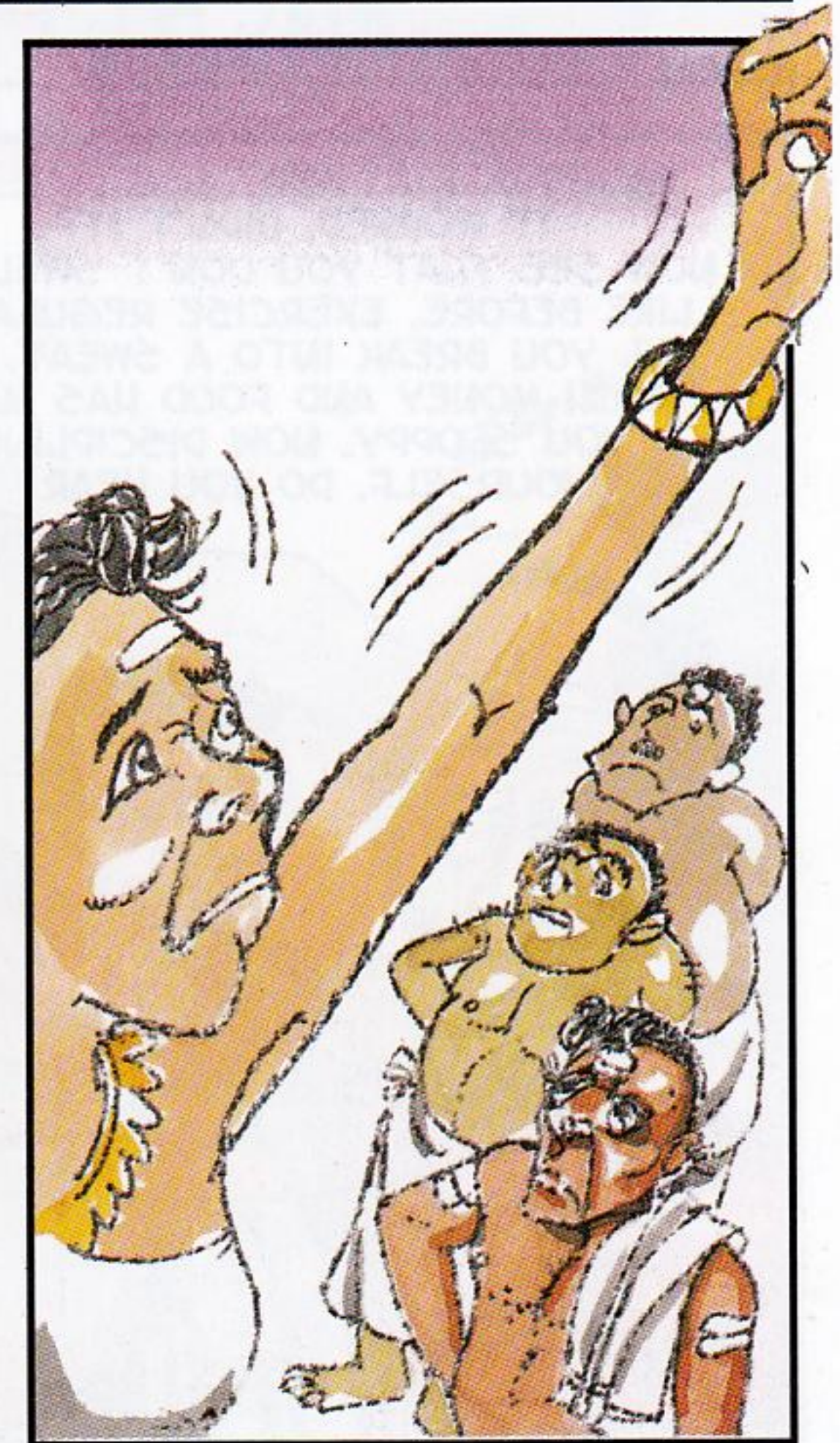
IT'S RHEUMATISM!

EVIL  
SPIRITS HAVE  
TAKEN OVER  
THIS HAND. I'LL  
DEAL WITH  
THEM.

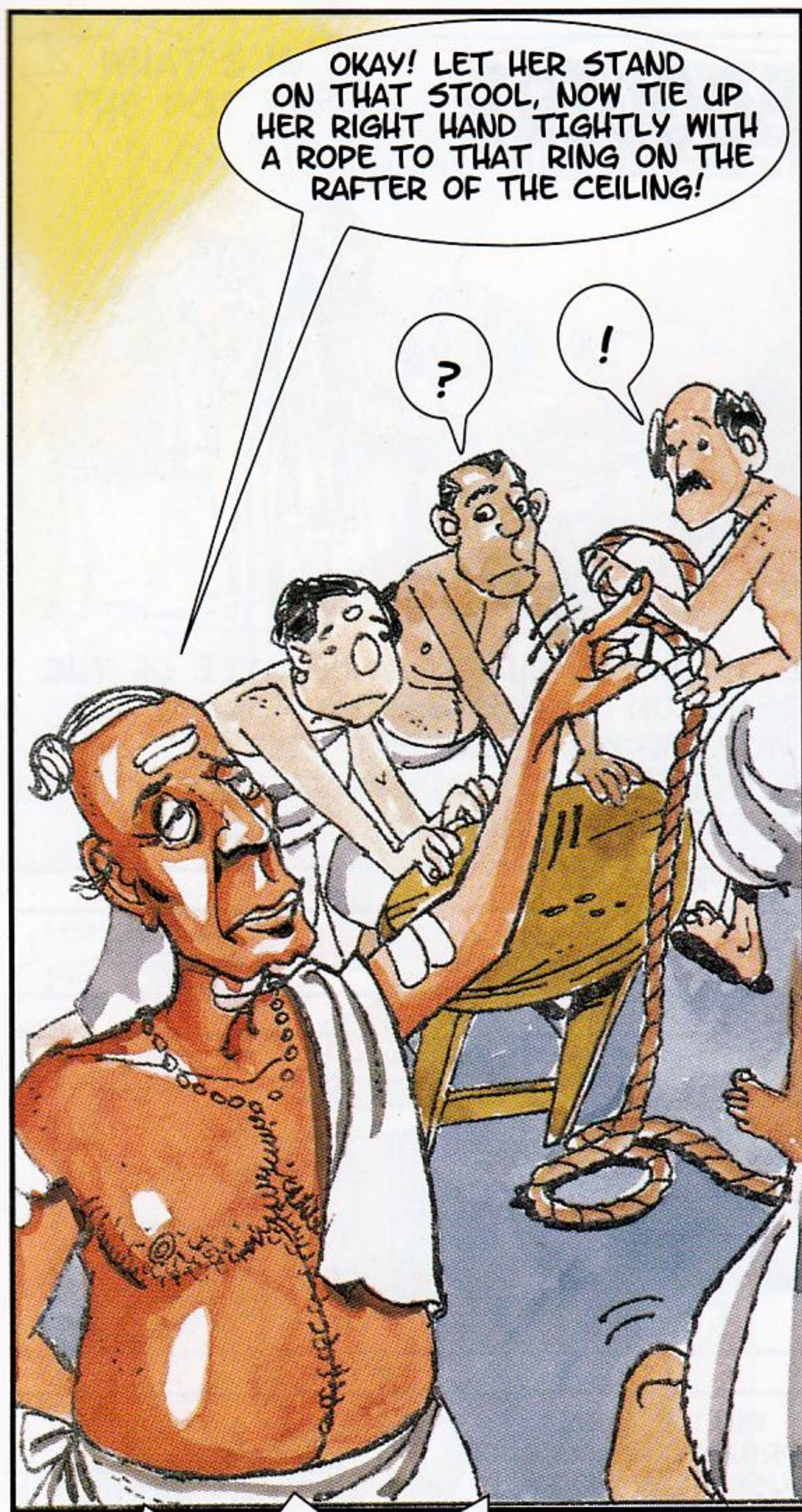
BUT THE HAND STAYED UP  
RATHER LIKE A FLAG POLE.

THE ELDER MOOSSU WAS THE ONLY  
ANSWER.

SAAR! YOU ARE  
OUR ONLY HOPE!







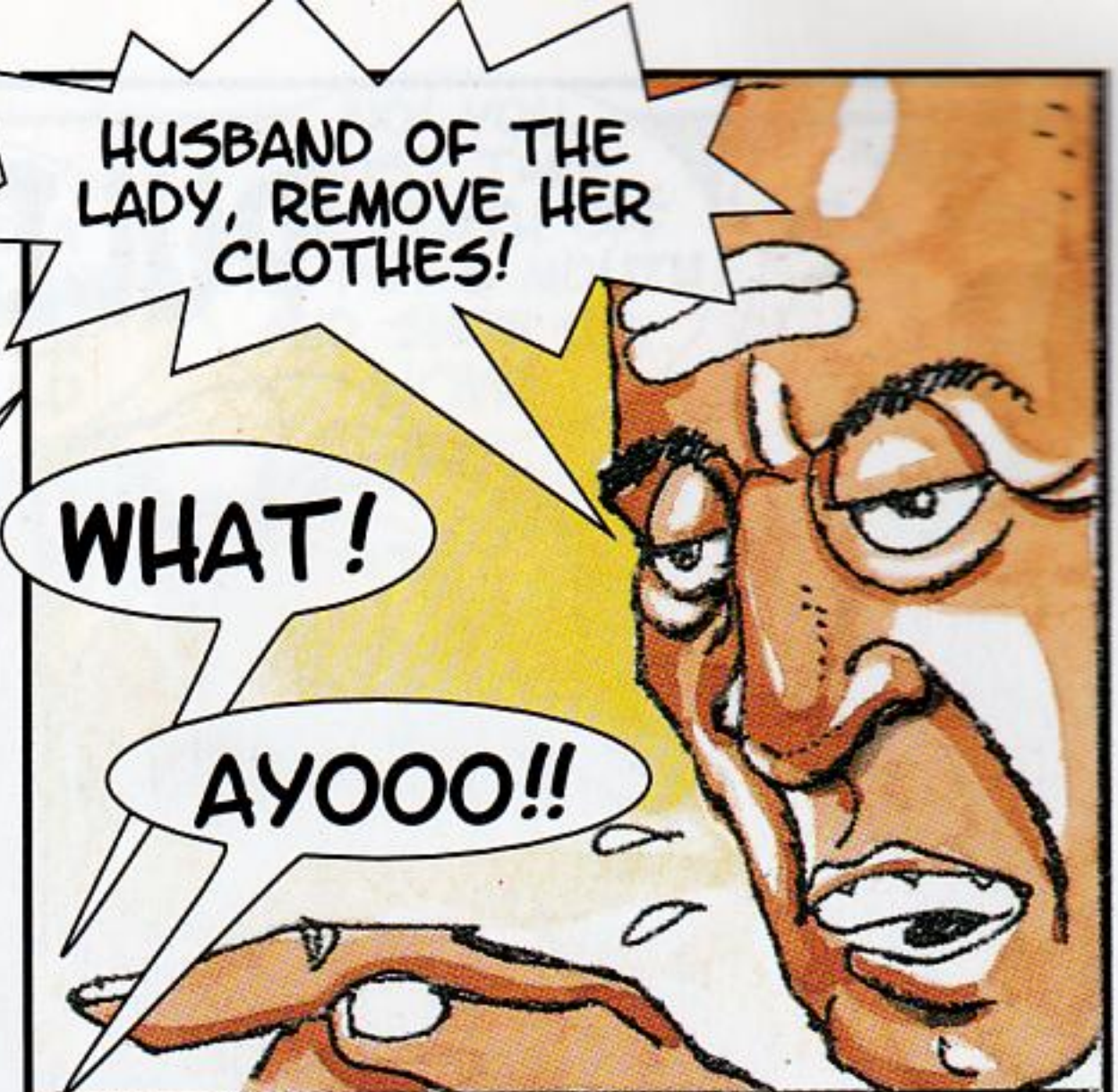
OKAY! LET HER STAND ON THAT STOOL, NOW TIE UP HER RIGHT HAND TIGHTLY WITH A ROPE TO THAT RING ON THE RAFTER OF THE CEILING!

?

!



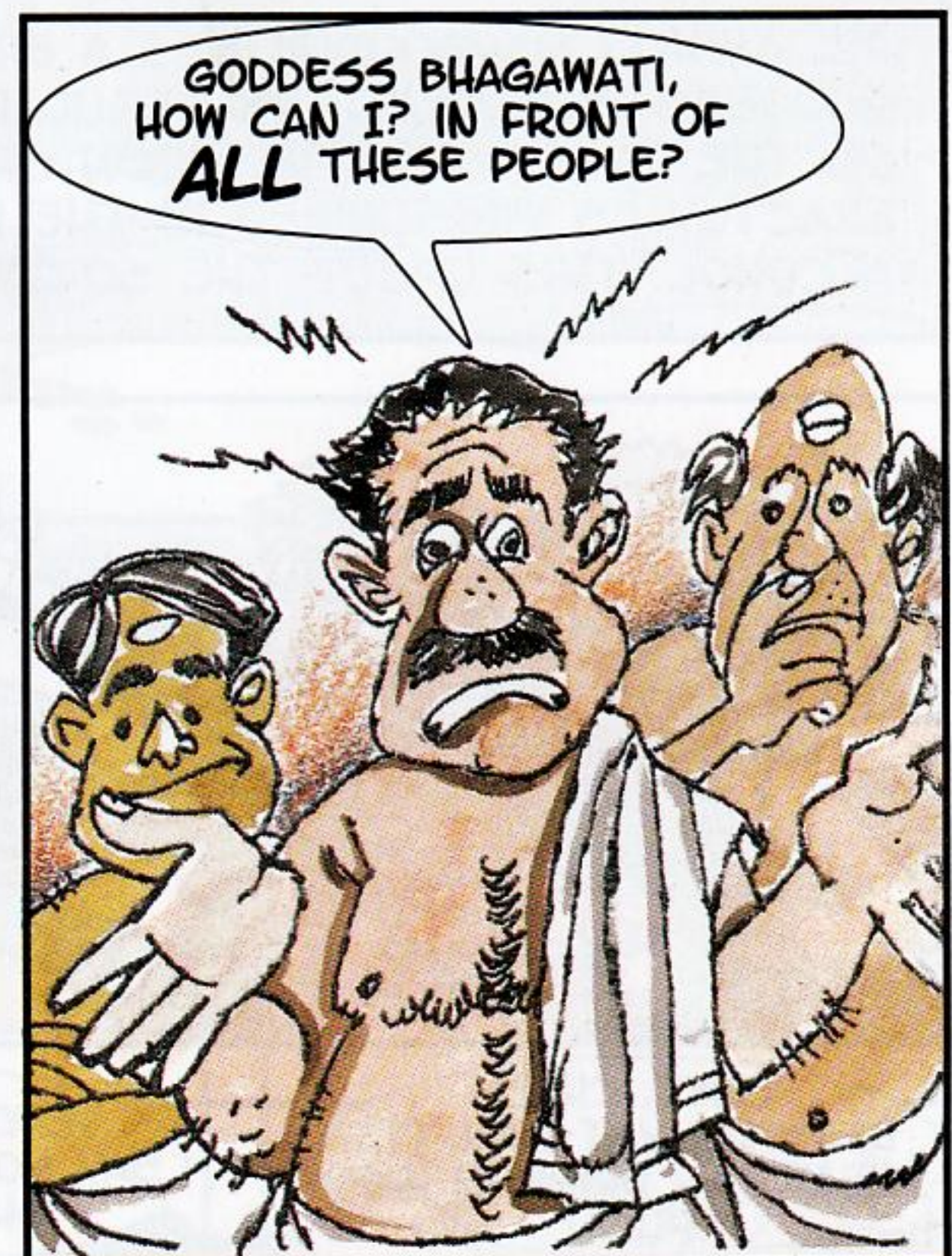
GOOD! AND NOW...



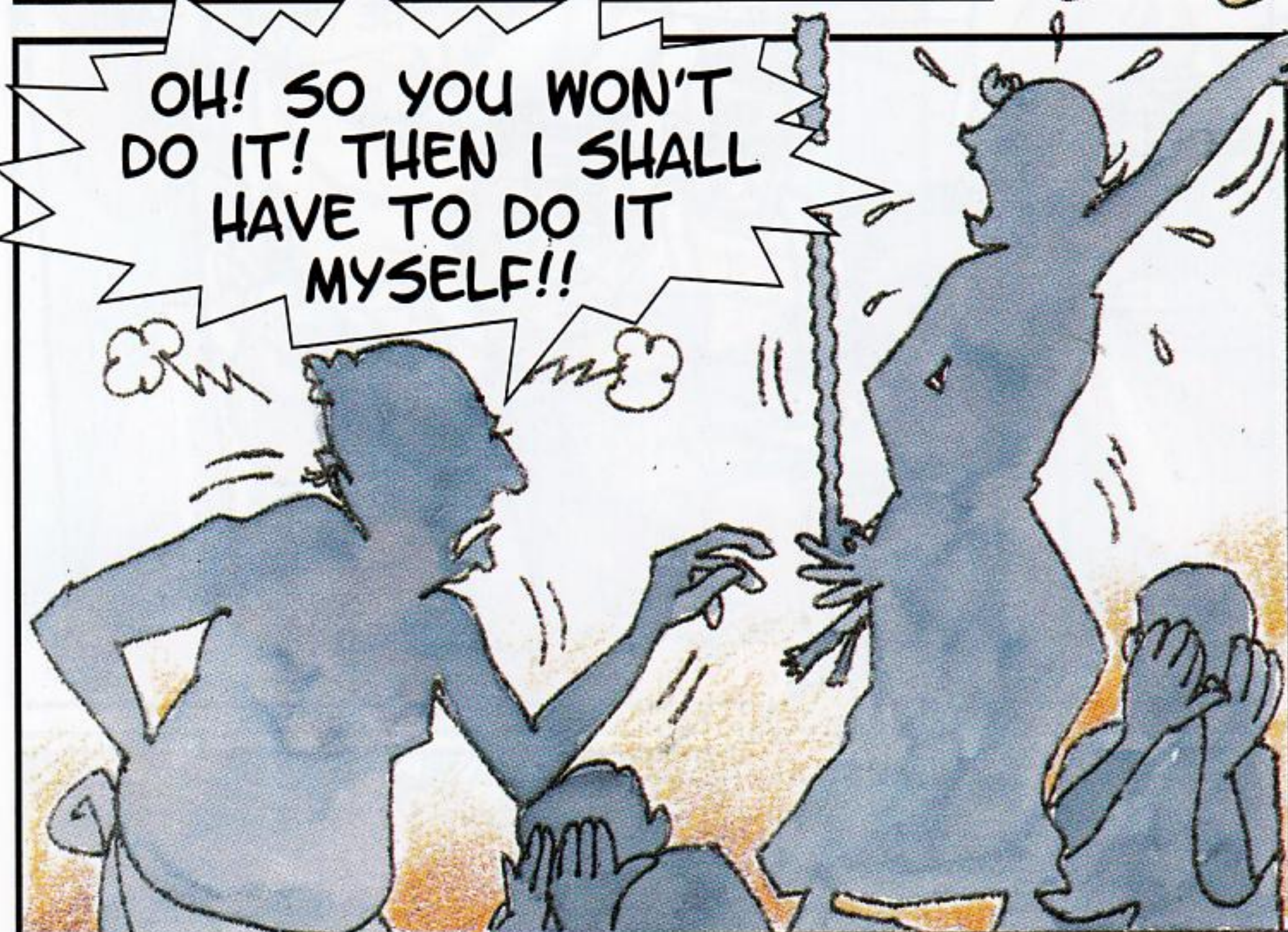
HUSBAND OF THE LADY, REMOVE HER CLOTHES!

WHAT!

AYOOO!!



GODDESS BHAGAWATI, HOW CAN I? IN FRONT OF ALL THESE PEOPLE?



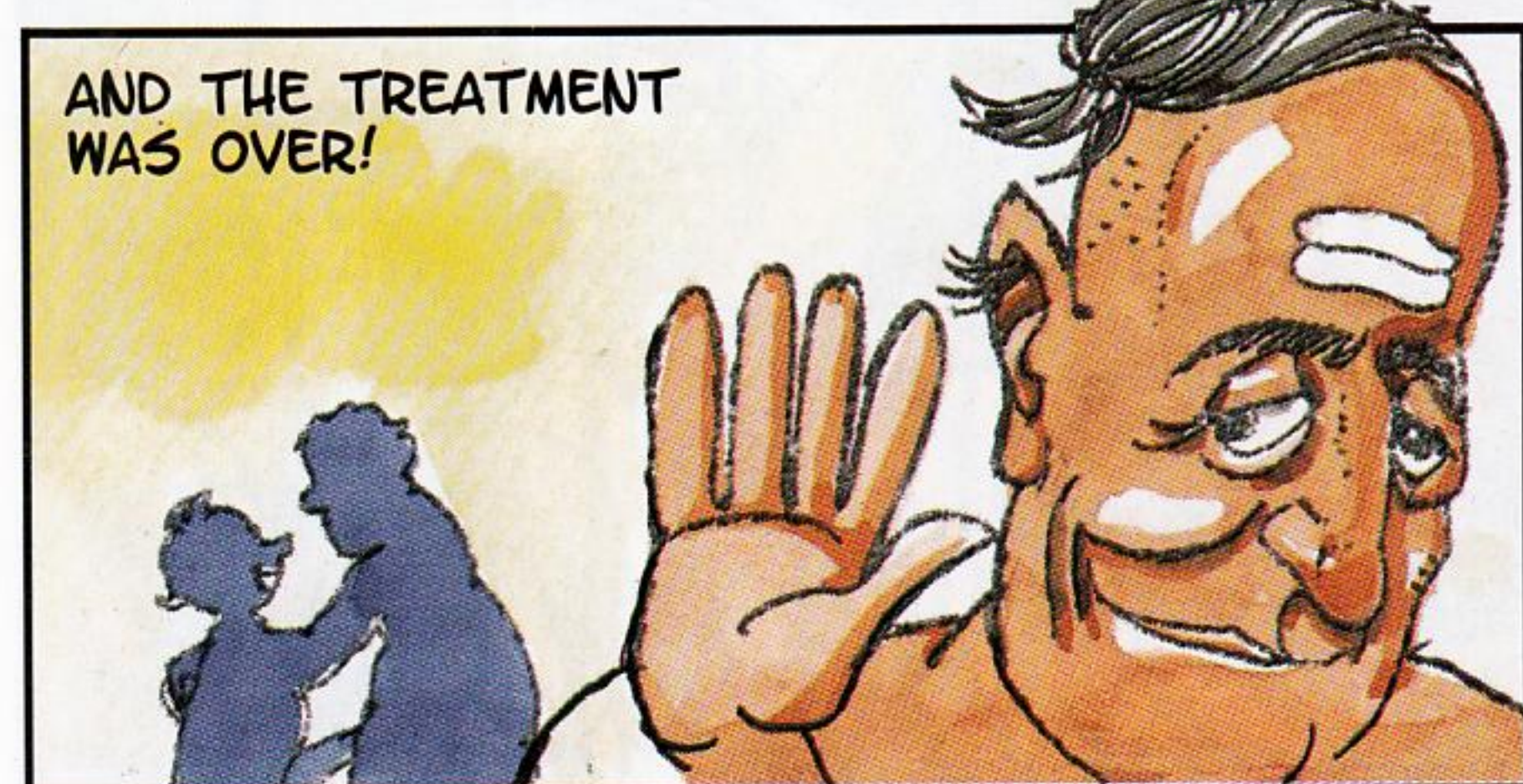
OH! SO YOU WON'T DO IT! THEN I SHALL HAVE TO DO IT MYSELF!!



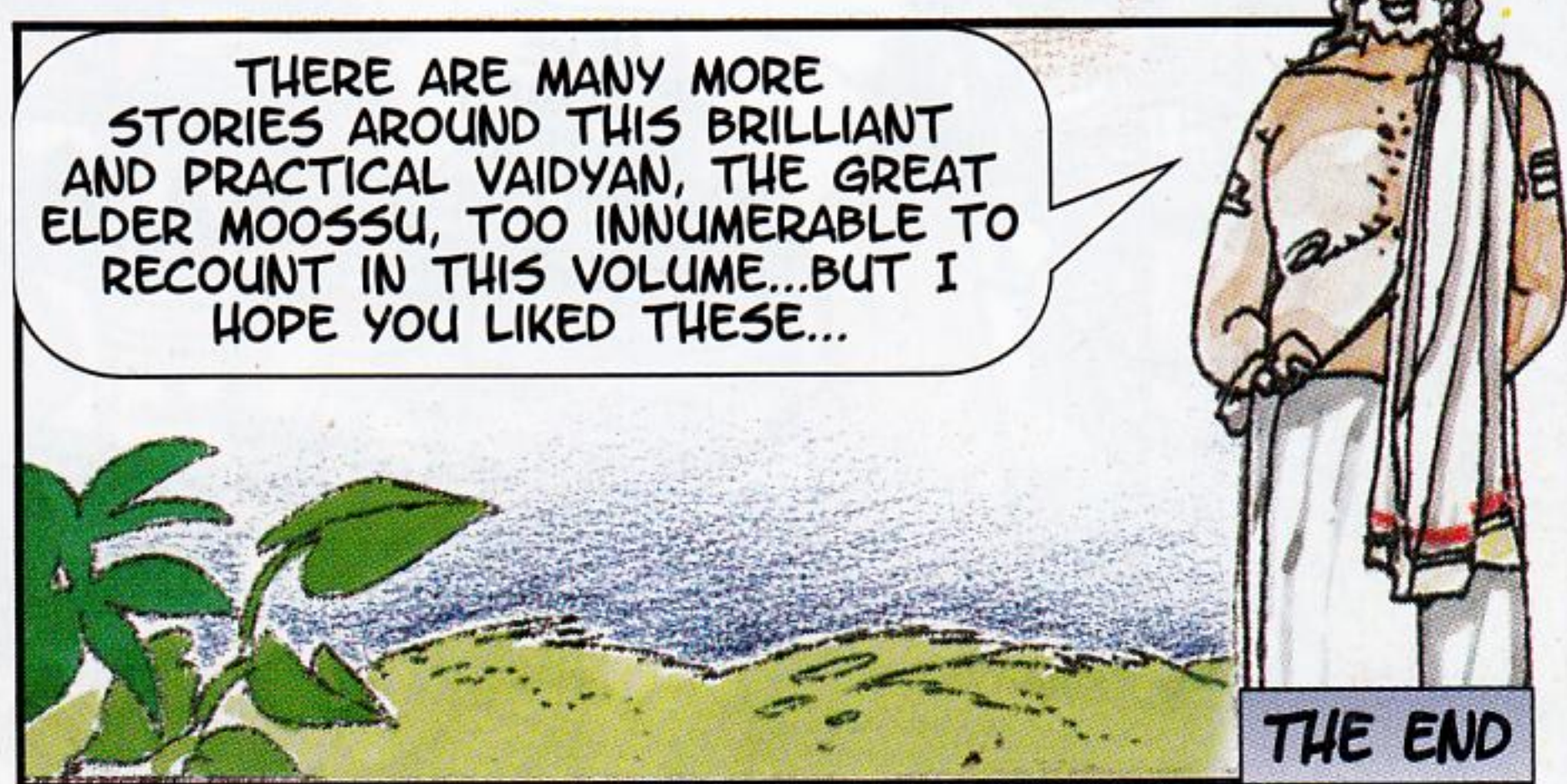
AYYO, ACHO, DON'T!!!

WHOOPT!!

HER HAND CAME DOWN!



AND THE TREATMENT WAS OVER!

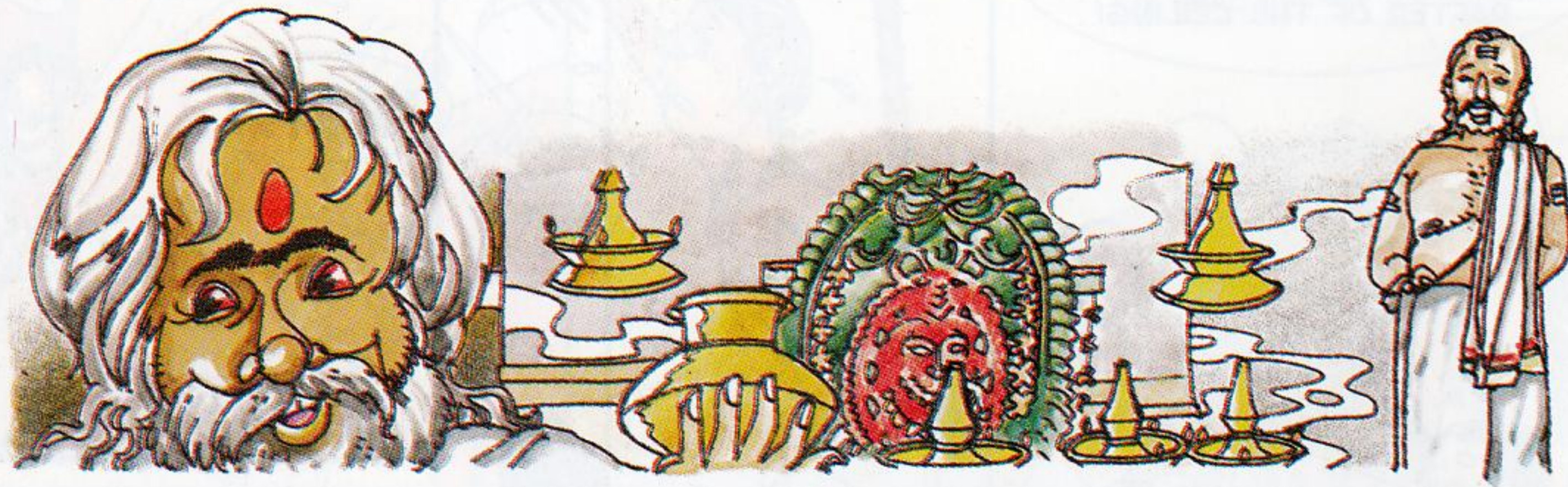


THERE ARE MANY MORE STORIES AROUND THIS BRILLIANT AND PRACTICAL VAIDYAN, THE GREAT ELDER MOOSSU, TOO INNUMERABLE TO RECOUNT IN THIS VOLUME...BUT I HOPE YOU LIKED THESE...

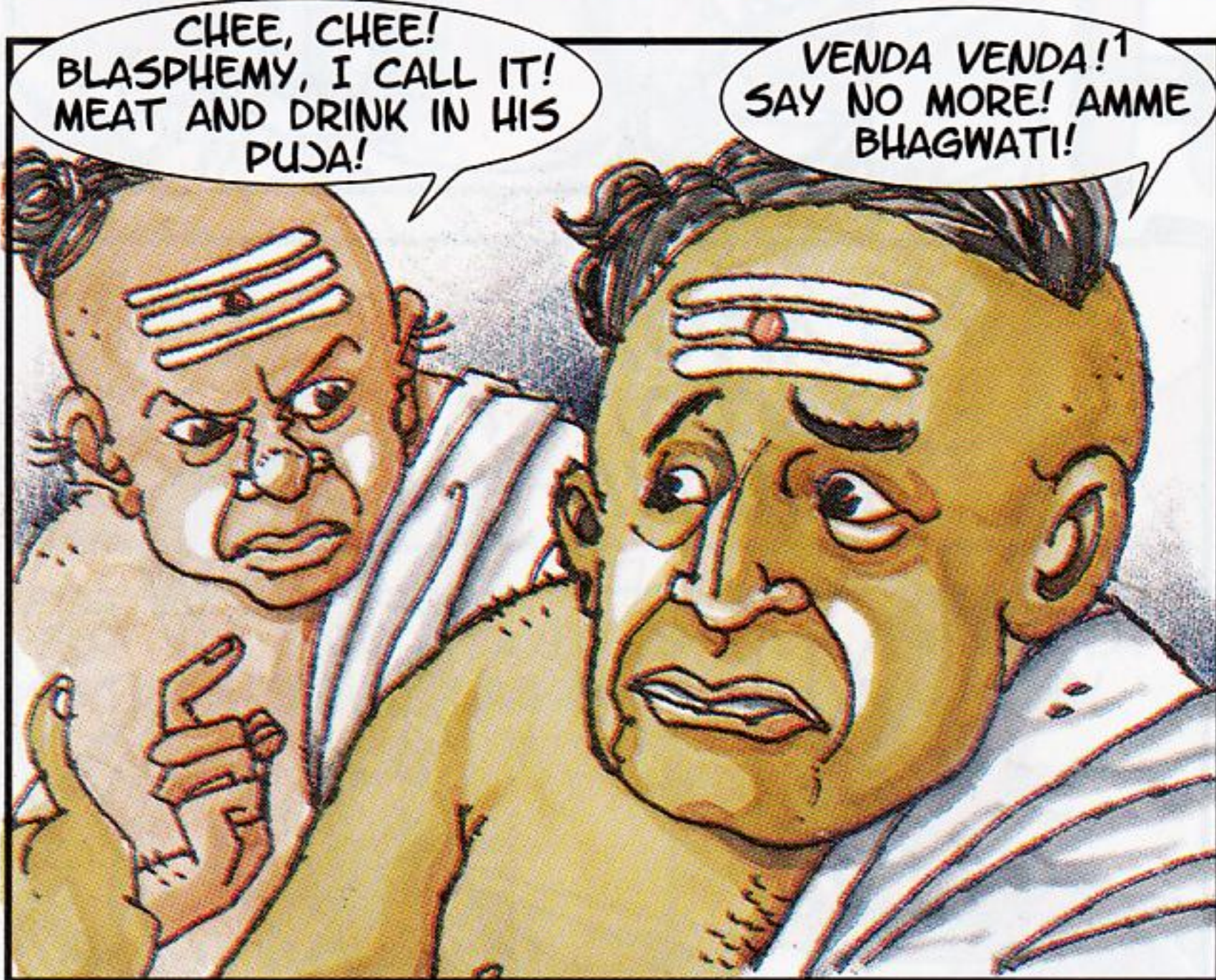
THE END



# PULIAMBILLI NAMBOODIRI



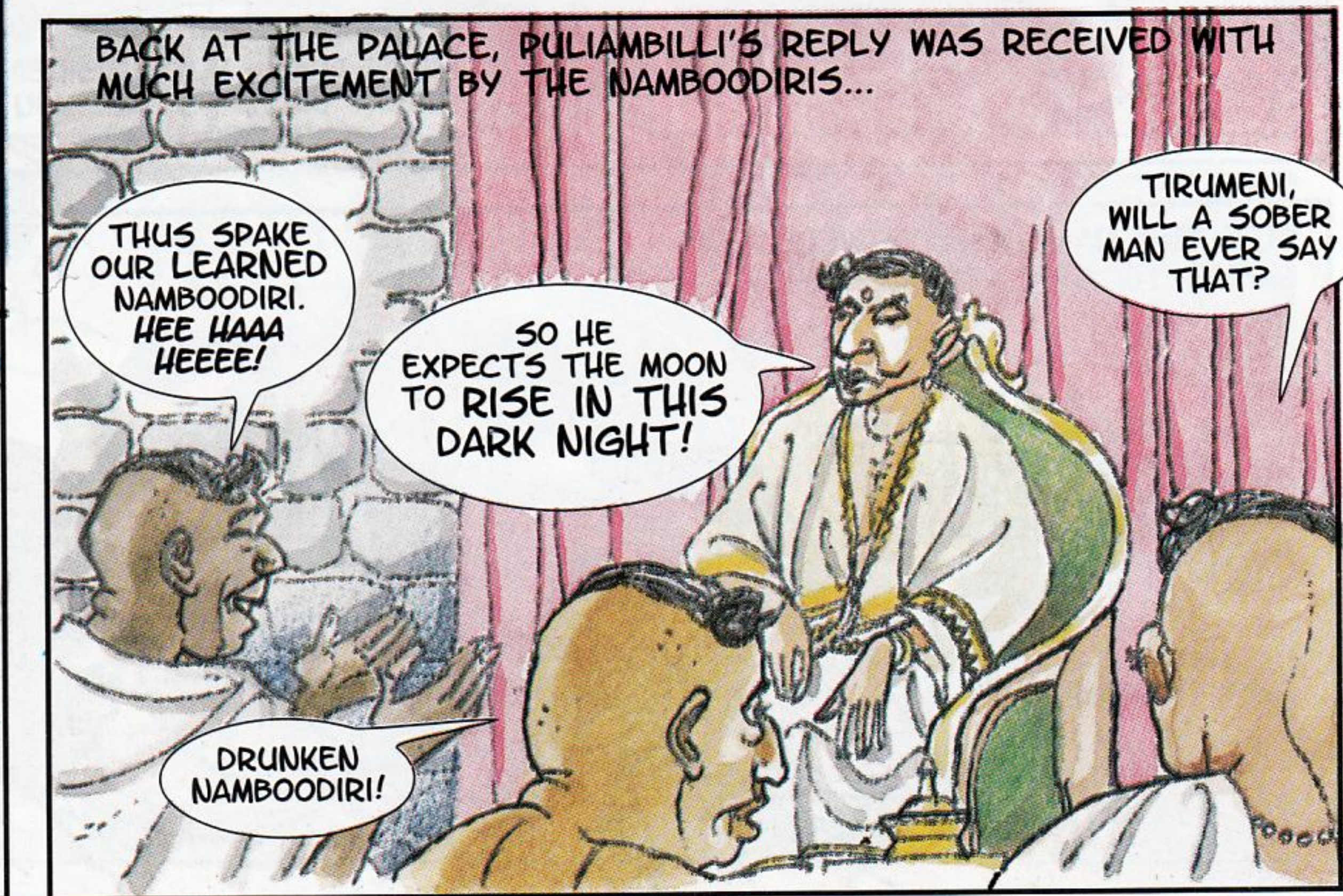
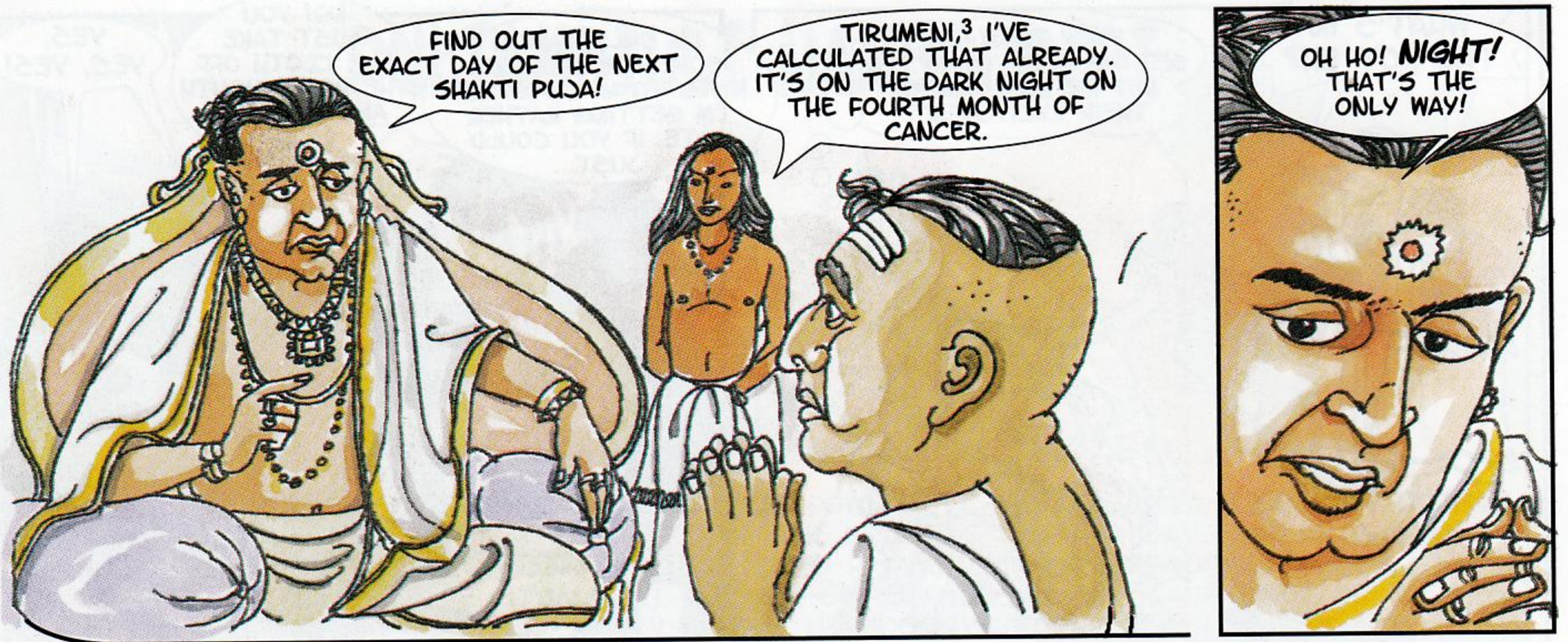
PULIAMBILLI NAMBOODIRI WAS A BRAHMIN WITH MAGICAL POWERS. HE WAS A SHAKTA, A DEVOTEE OF THE GODDESS BHAGAWATI. HE REGULARLY MEDITATED ON THE GODDESS. ON THURSDAYS AND FRIDAYS AND ON THE DAYS WHEN THE MOON CHANGED, HE CONDUCTED HIS WORSHIP WITH MEAT AND SPIRITS EXACTLY AS PRESCRIBED IN THE RITUALS. AT THE END OF THE WORSHIP, HE DRANK A LOT OF ALCOHOL. THIS UPSET THE SO-CALLED TRULY DEVOUT NAMBOODIRIS OF THE REGION.



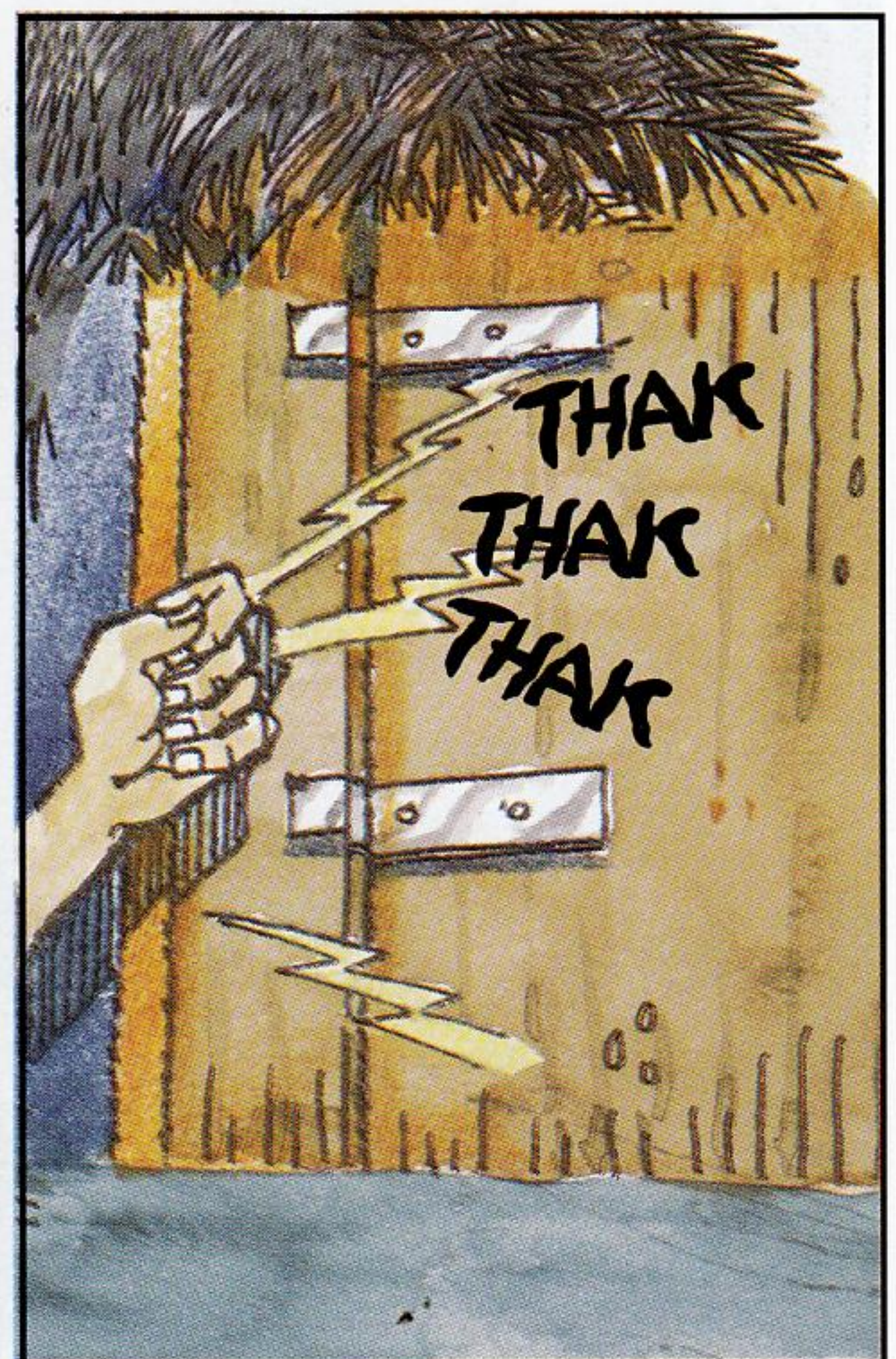
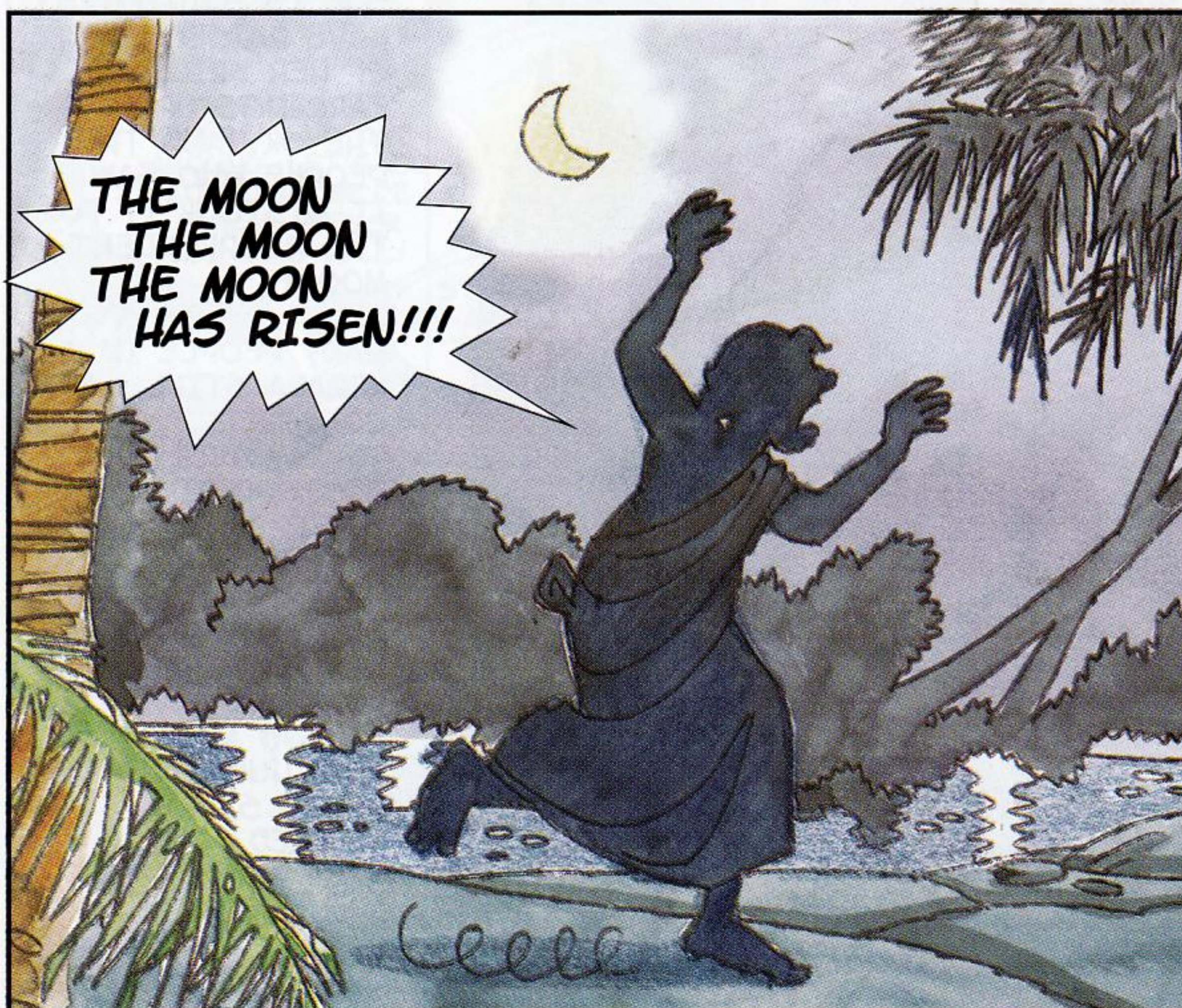
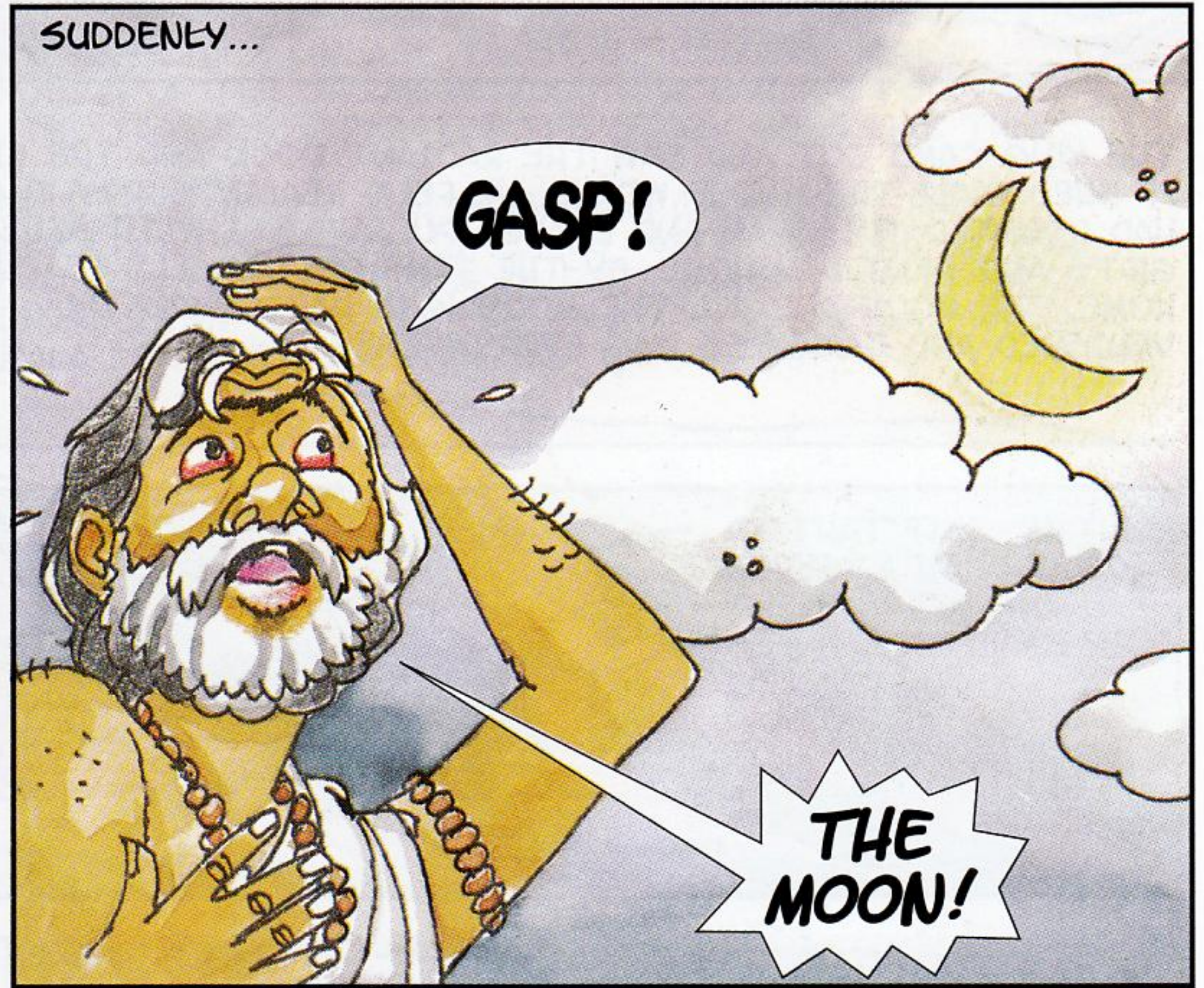
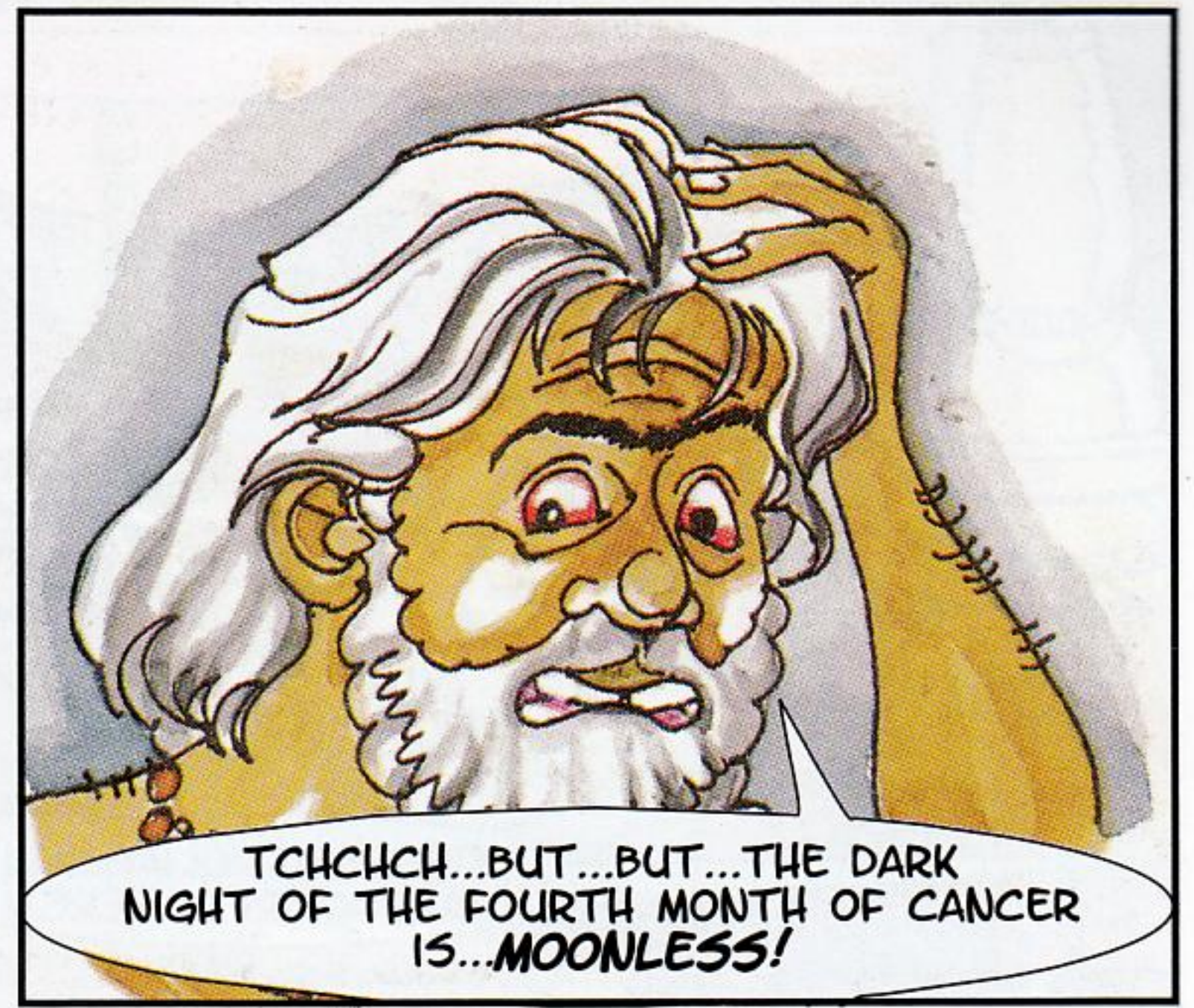
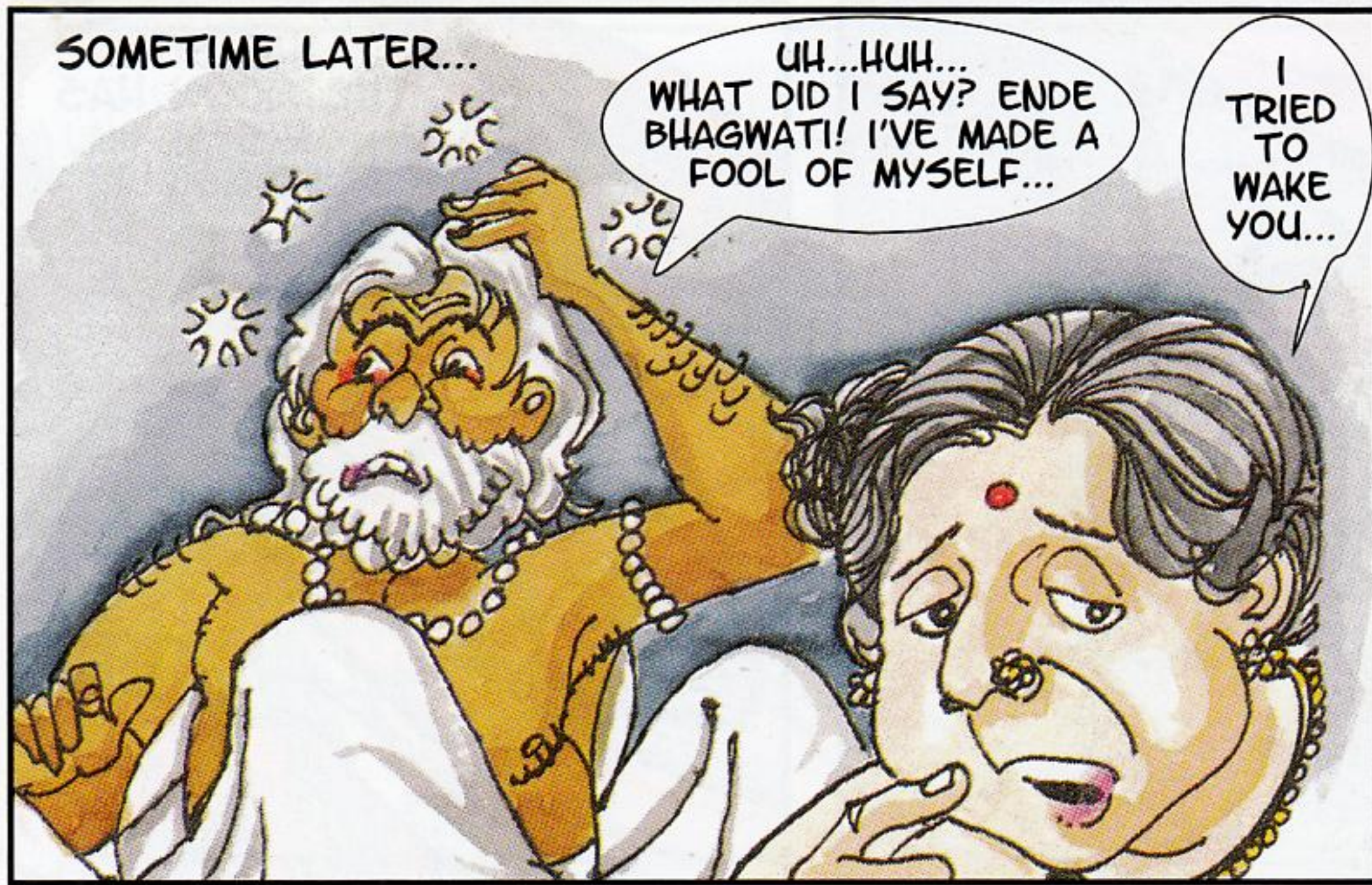




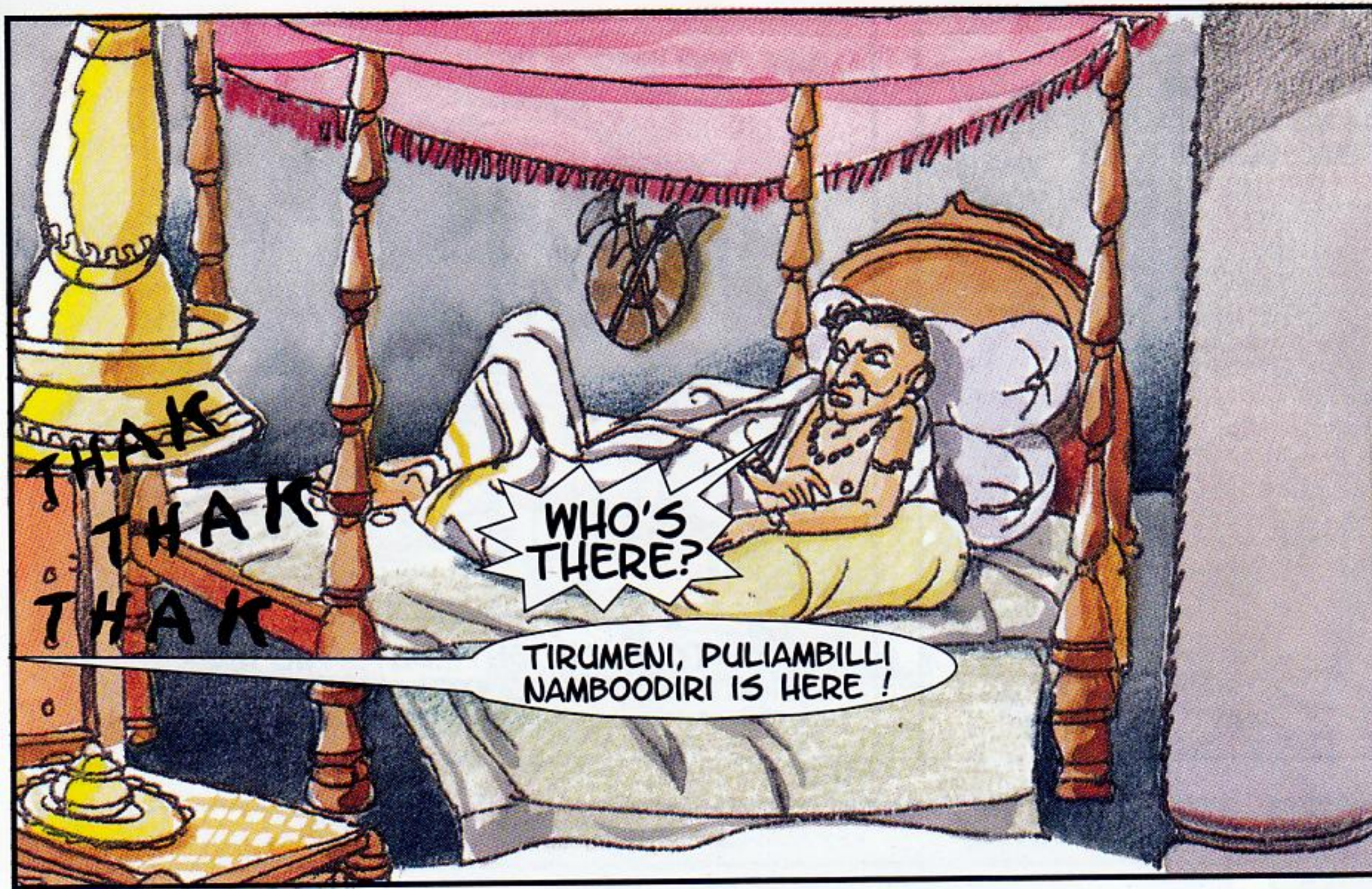




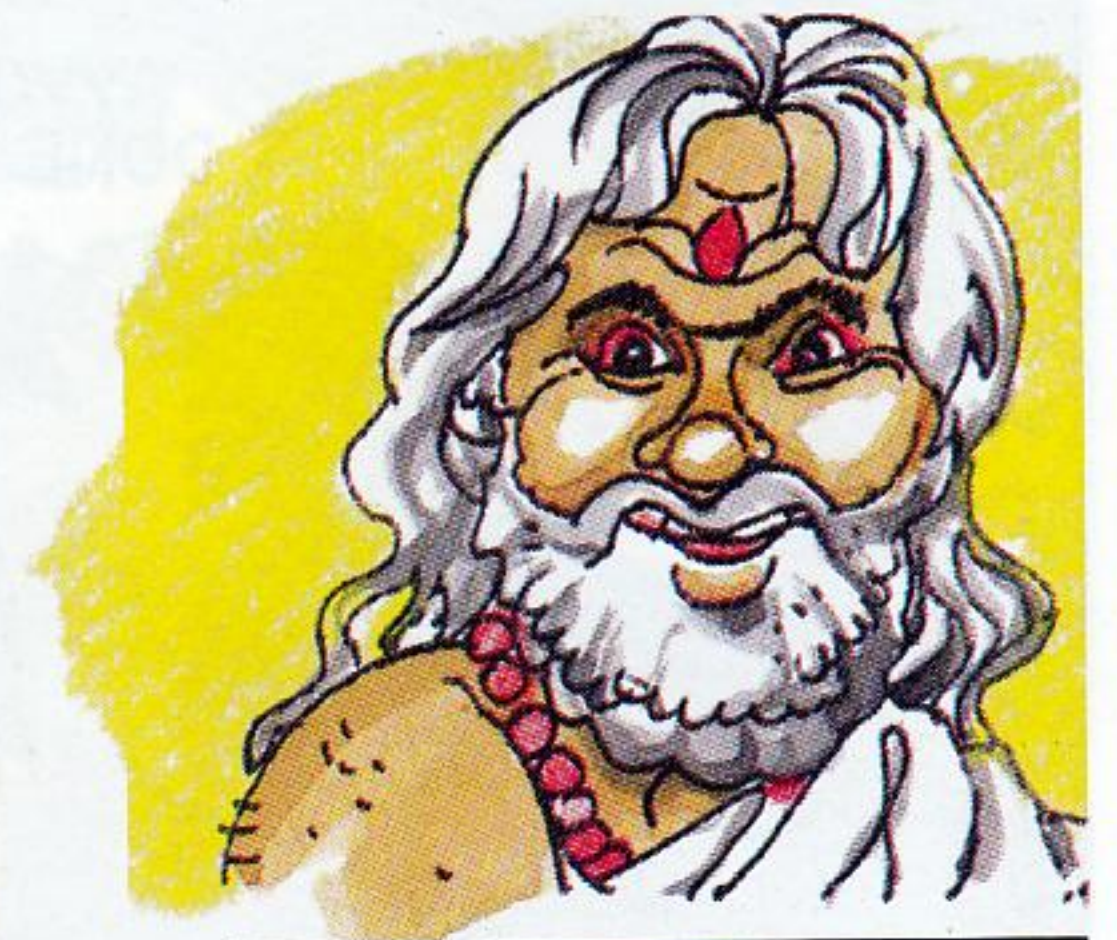








THE KING CAME OUT AND SAW THE RADIANT MOON AND THE LIGHT IT SHED OVER THE WHOLE WORLD. HE FELT REALLY SORRY THAT HE HAD DOUBTED THIS MAN AND LOADED PULIAMBILLI WITH SEVERAL GIFTS AND SENT HIM HOME. BY THE TIME PULIAMBILLI REACHED HOME, THE MOON AND ALL THE MOONLIGHT HAD COMPLETELY VANISHED AND DARKNESS WAS EVERYWHERE.



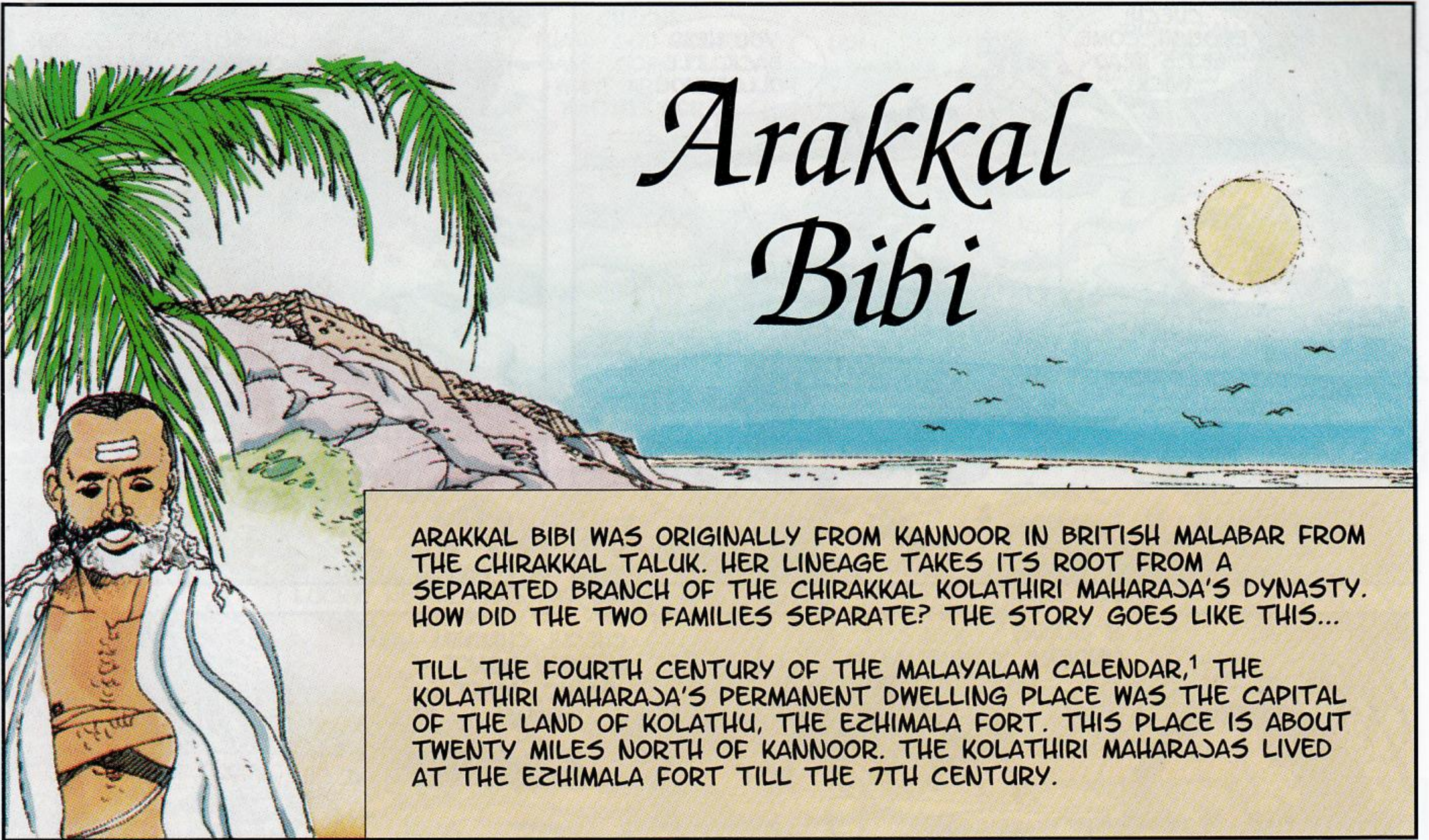
IT IS SAID THAT SHE OF THE THREE WORLDS, THE ALL POWERFUL GODDESS WHO LOVES HER DEVOTEES, WILL NEVER LET THEM DOWN OR HAVE THEM HUMILIATED. SHE IS SAID TO HAVE RAISED ONE OF HER BRILLIANT EARRINGS UP TO THE SKY AND THE PEOPLE WHO SAW IT MISTOOK IT FOR THE RESPLENDENT MOON!

MANY PEOPLE IN KERALA STILL CONSIDER PULIAMBILLI NAMBOODIRI TO BE THEIR FAMILY DEITY.

IT IS SAID THAT HIS ILLAM<sup>6</sup> WAS IN KOZHIKODE AND IT IS NOW MORE THAN FIVE HUNDRED YEARS SINCE HE DIED.

THE END

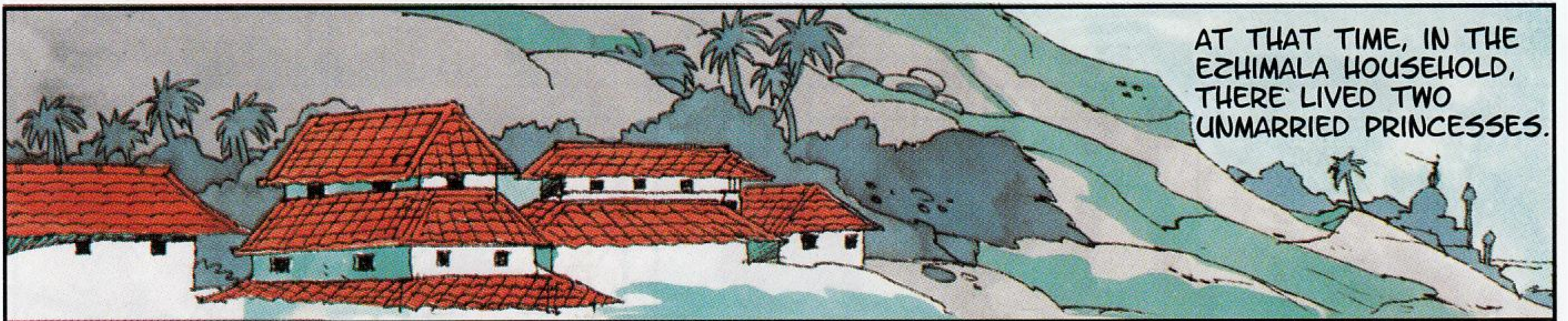




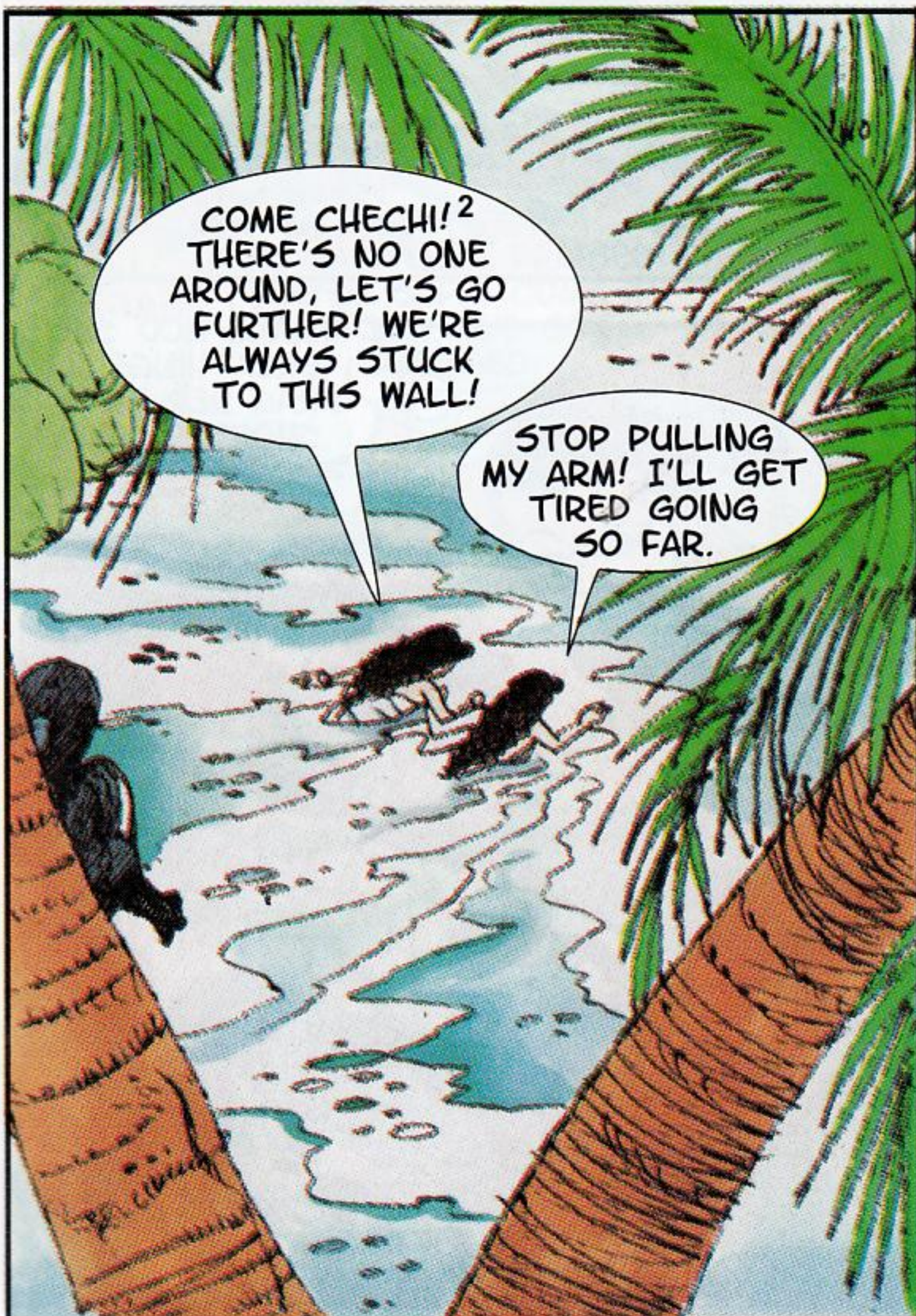
# Arakkal Bibi

ARAKKAL BIBI WAS ORIGINALLY FROM KANNOOR IN BRITISH MALABAR FROM THE CHIRAKKAL TALUK. HER LINEAGE TAKES ITS ROOT FROM A SEPARATED BRANCH OF THE CHIRAKKAL KOLATHIRI MAHARAJA'S DYNASTY. HOW DID THE TWO FAMILIES SEPARATE? THE STORY GOES LIKE THIS...

TILL THE FOURTH CENTURY OF THE MALAYALAM CALENDAR,<sup>1</sup> THE KOLATHIRI MAHARAJA'S PERMANENT DWELLING PLACE WAS THE CAPITAL OF THE LAND OF KOLATHU, THE EZHIMALA FORT. THIS PLACE IS ABOUT TWENTY MILES NORTH OF KANNOOR. THE KOLATHIRI MAHARAJAS LIVED AT THE EZHIMALA FORT TILL THE 7TH CENTURY.



AT THAT TIME, IN THE EZHIMALA HOUSEHOLD, THERE LIVED TWO UNMARRIED PRINCESSES.



COME CHECHI!<sup>2</sup> THERE'S NO ONE AROUND, LET'S GO FURTHER! WE'RE ALWAYS STUCK TO THIS WALL!

STOP PULLING MY ARM! I'LL GET TIRED GOING SO FAR.



COME ON, SPOIL SPORT SISTER! LET'S HAVE SOME FUN!

WELL ALRIGHT, BUT NOT VERY FAR!





CHECHI, ENOUGH, COME, LET'S HEAD BACK.

YOU HEAD BACK. I'LL FOLLOW YOU.



SUDDENLY...

MY LIMBS! I CAN'T GO ON! THE CURRENT... AAAAH, IT'S PULLING AT MY FEET! ENDE DEIVAME! OH MY GOD!

!AAAAAAA



I'M GOING UNDER!

CHECHI, CHECHI! HURRY! DON'T PANIC, JUST SWIM!



ENDE ALLAH!

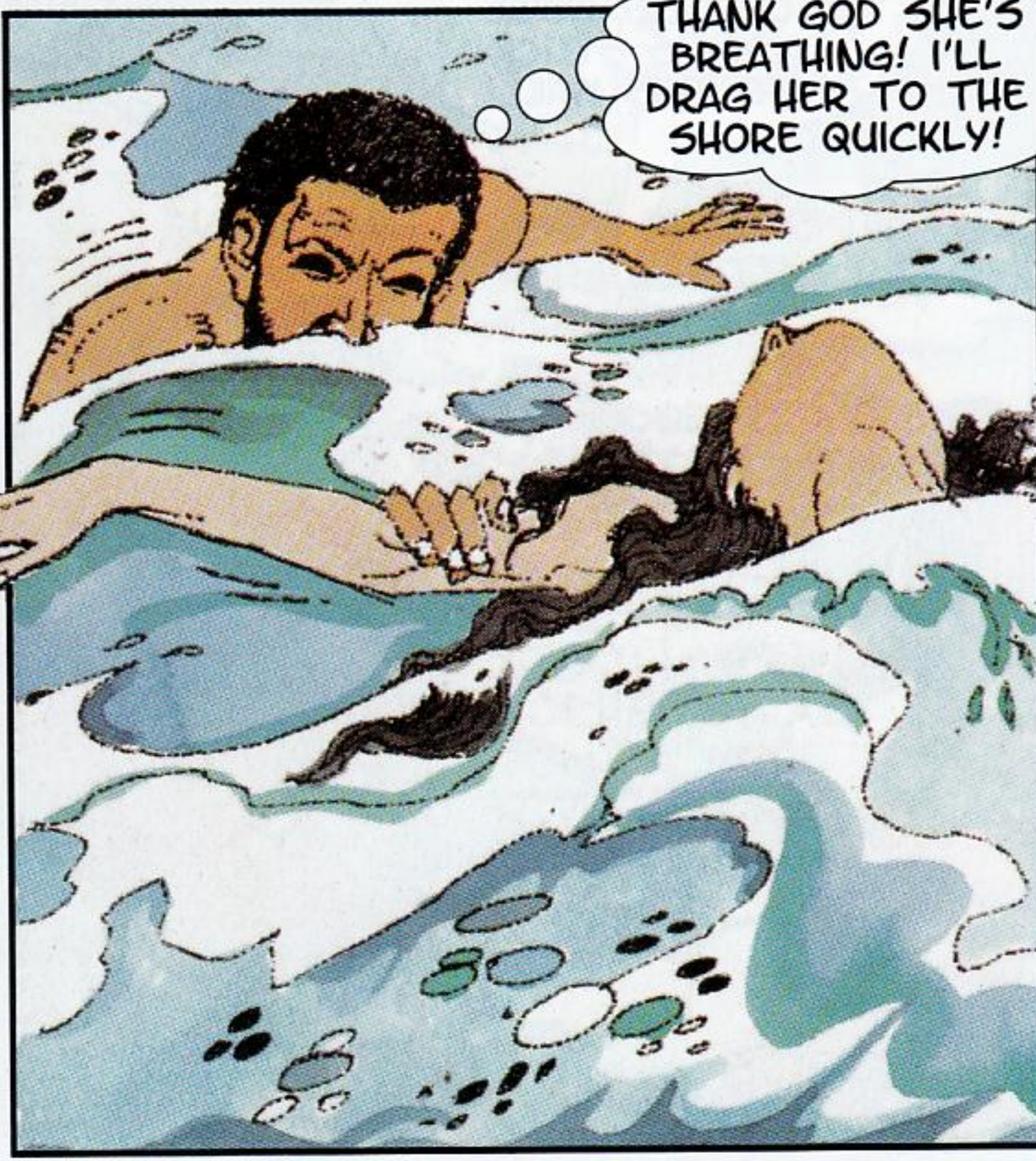
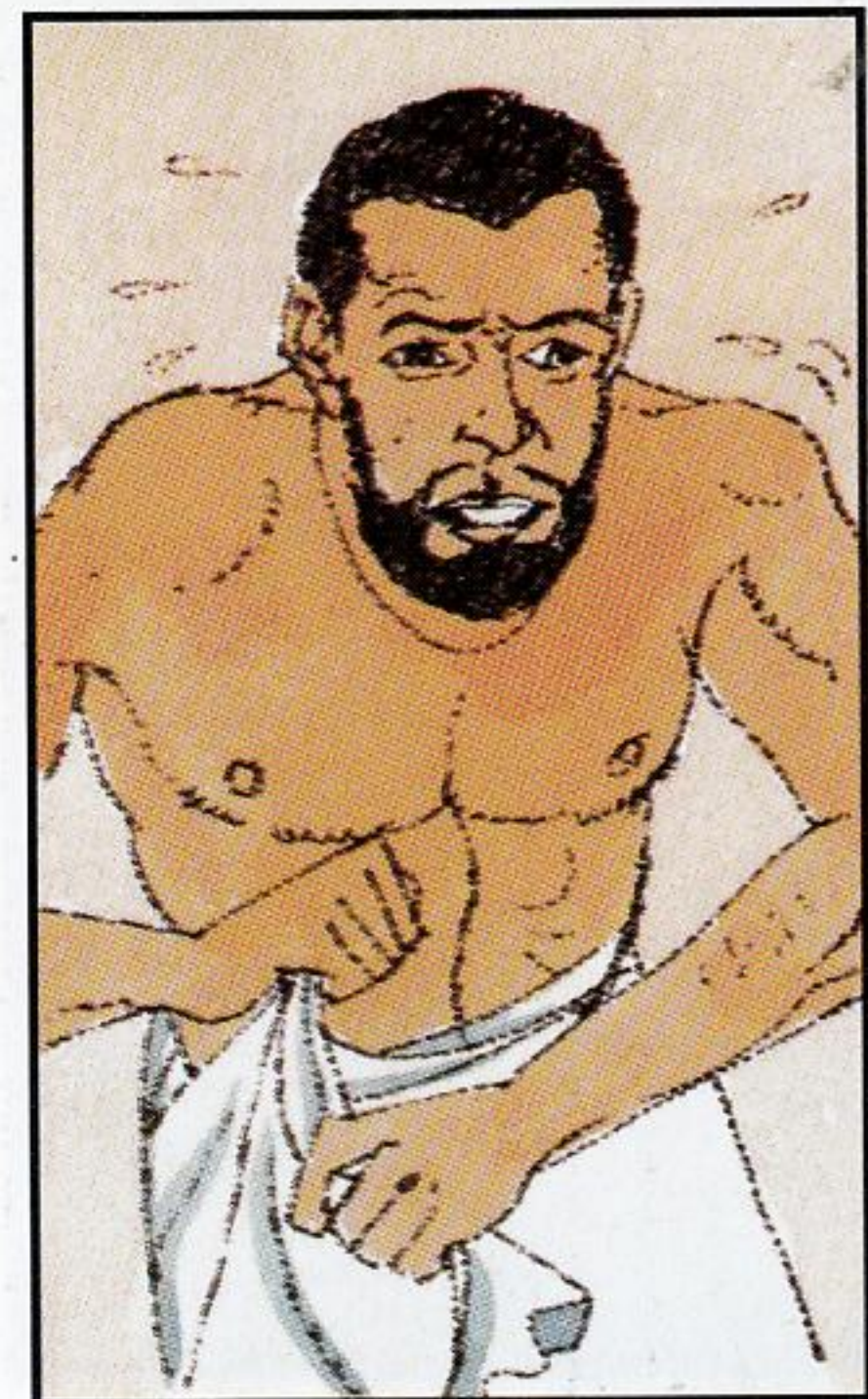
!



HELP!



SPLASH!



THANK GOD SHE'S BREATHING! I'LL DRAG HER TO THE SHORE QUICKLY!



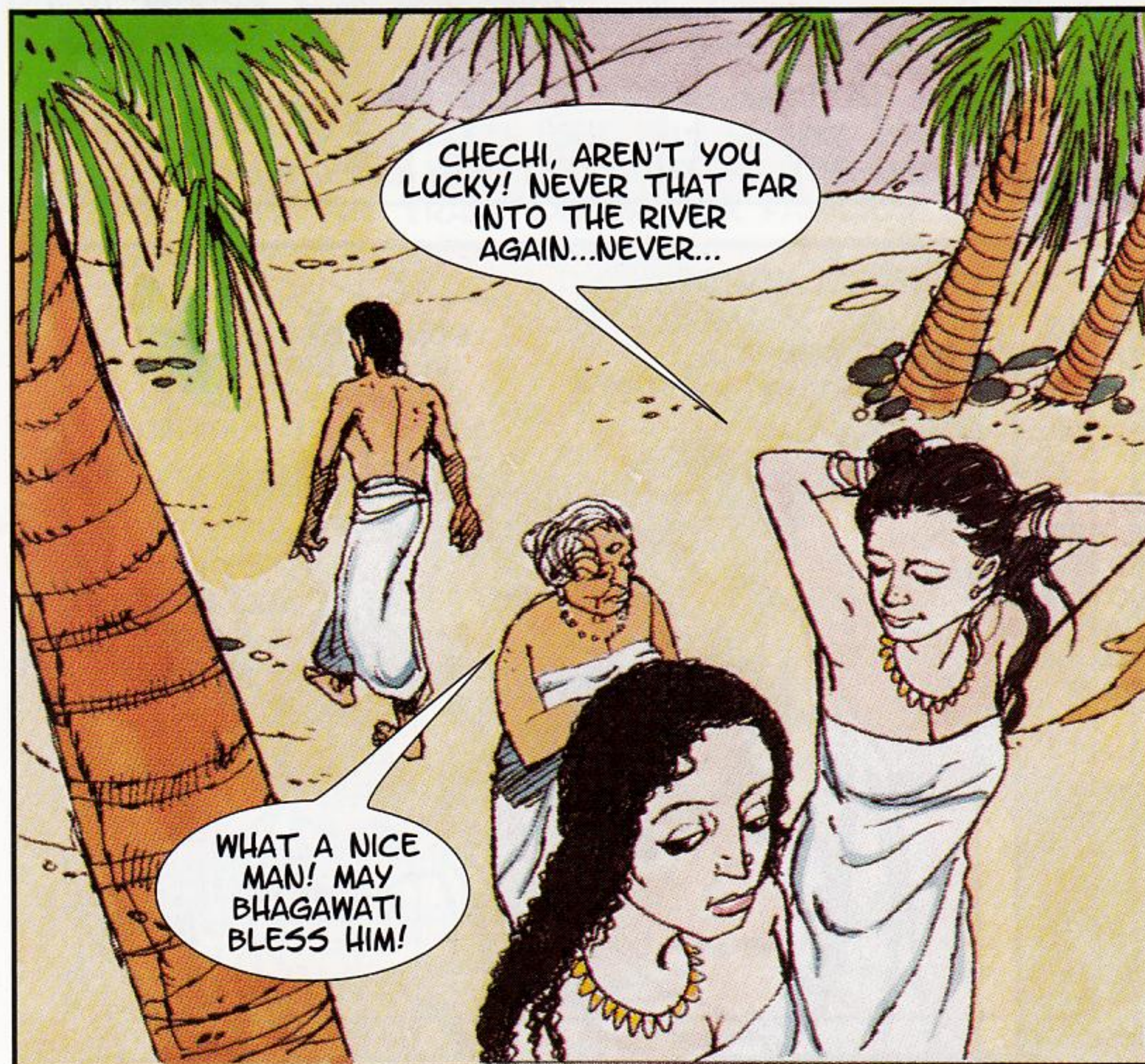


CHECHI, THANK GOD YOU'RE SAFE! COME OUT, WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?

UH!

!?

OH! I CAN GUESS. HER UPPER GARMENT MUST HAVE BEEN SWEEPED AWAY BY THE CURRENT, SO SHE'S SHY TO STEP OUT.



CHECHI, AREN'T YOU LUCKY! NEVER THAT FAR INTO THE RIVER AGAIN...NEVER...

WHAT A NICE MAN! MAY BHAGAWATI BLESS HIM!

HERE, PLEASE TAKE THIS. IT'S NEW, SO I THINK IT'S QUITE WORTHY OF YOU!



HE IS A SOLDIER IN OUR MAHARAJA'S ARMY. A MUSLIM RECRUIT.

A MUSLIM!



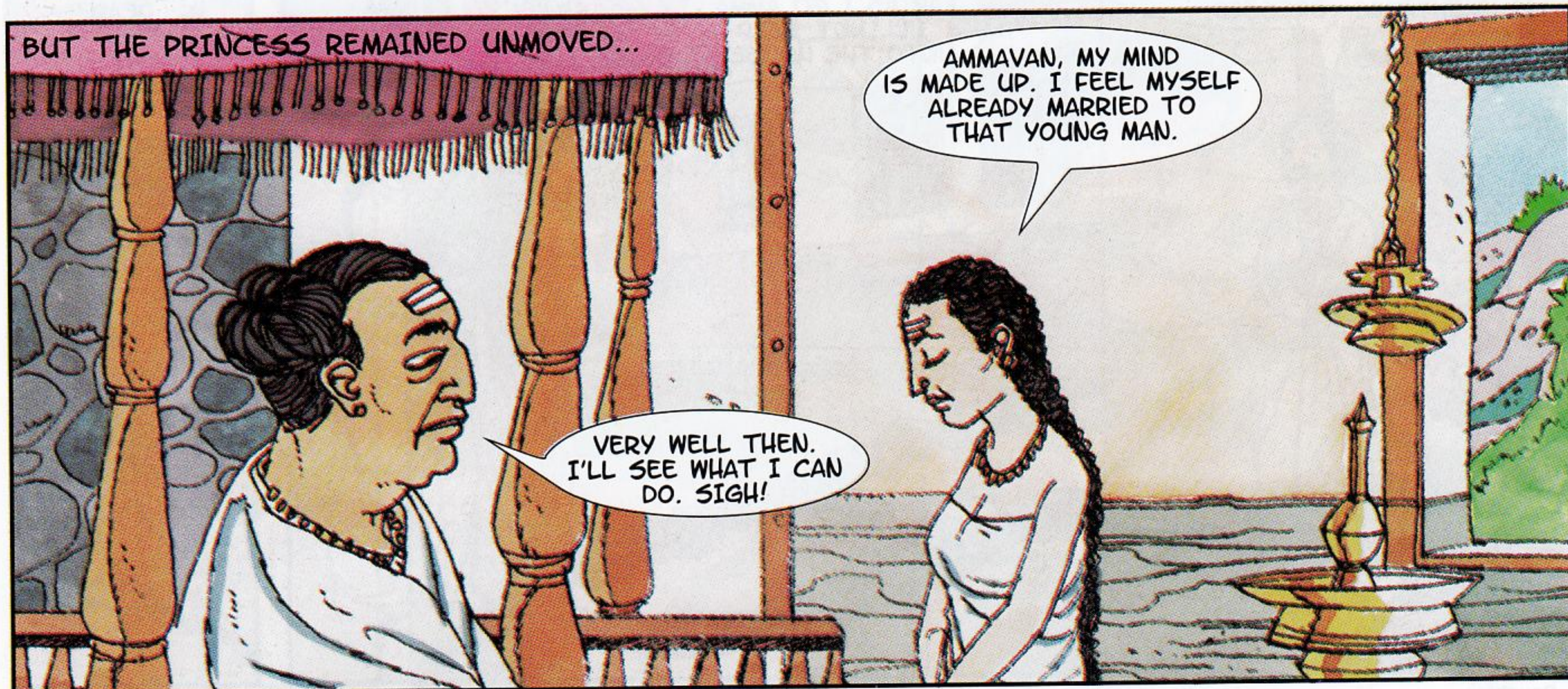
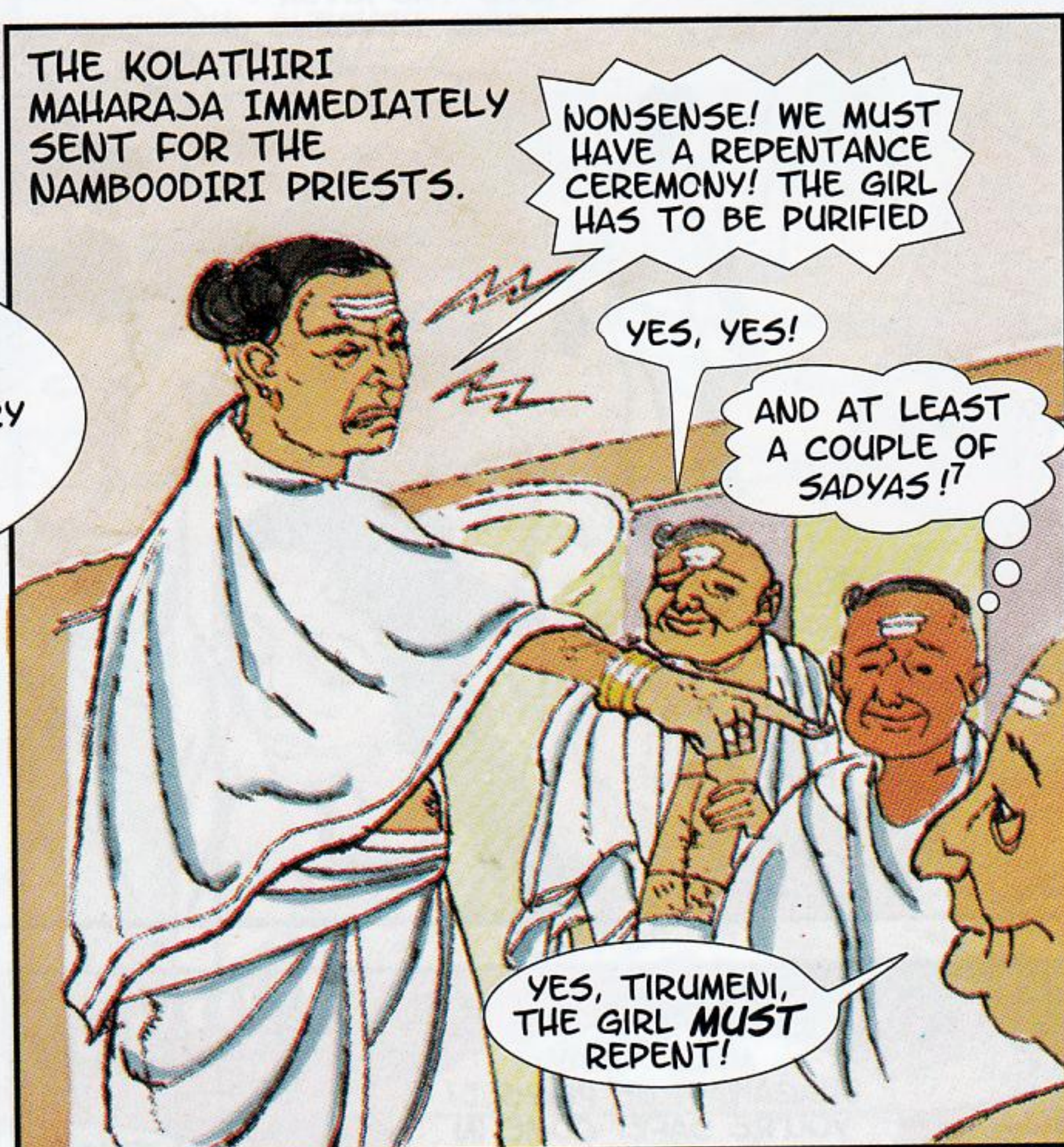
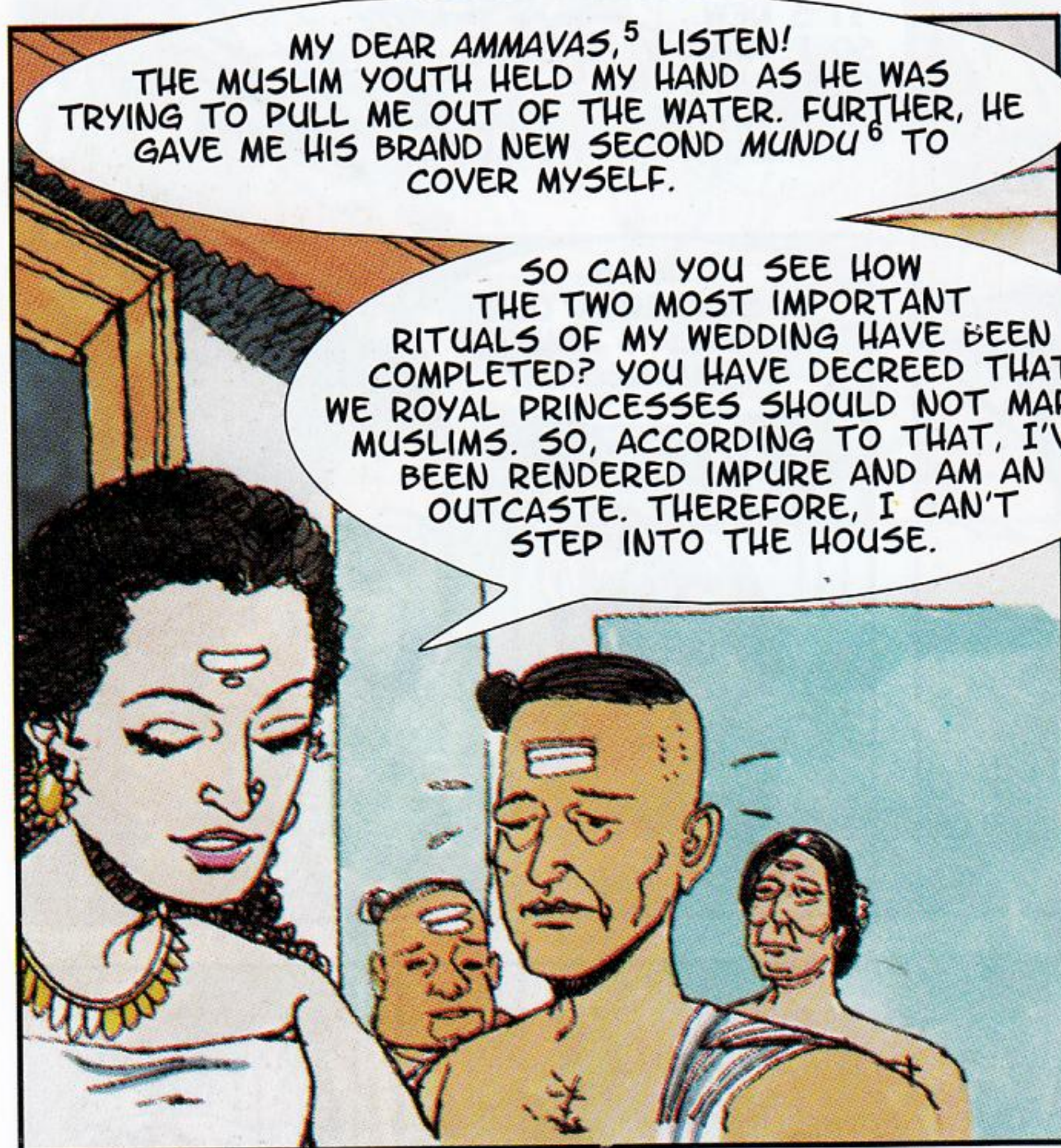
MOLE! MAY BHAGAWATI BE PRAISED! YOU'RE SAFE! COME IN QUICKLY AND GET DRESSED.

THIS IS AS FAR AS I GO AMMA, I'LL NOT STEP INTO THE HOUSE!

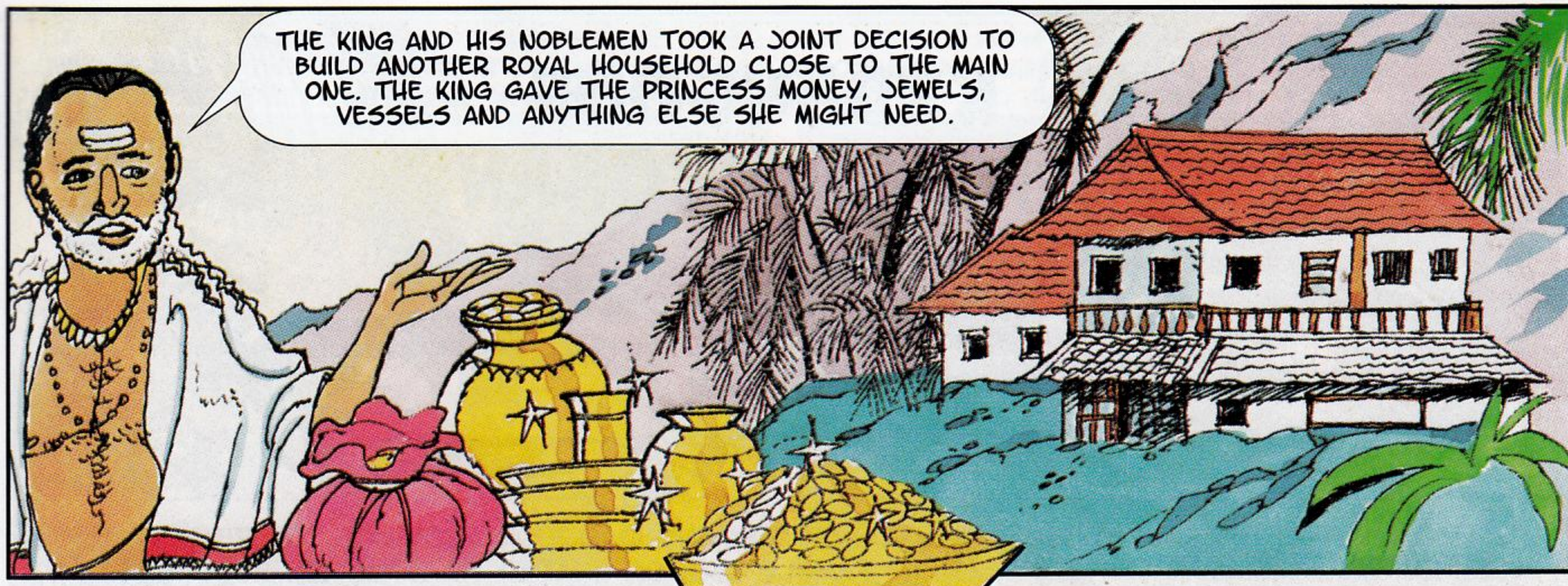


BUT WHY DEAR?

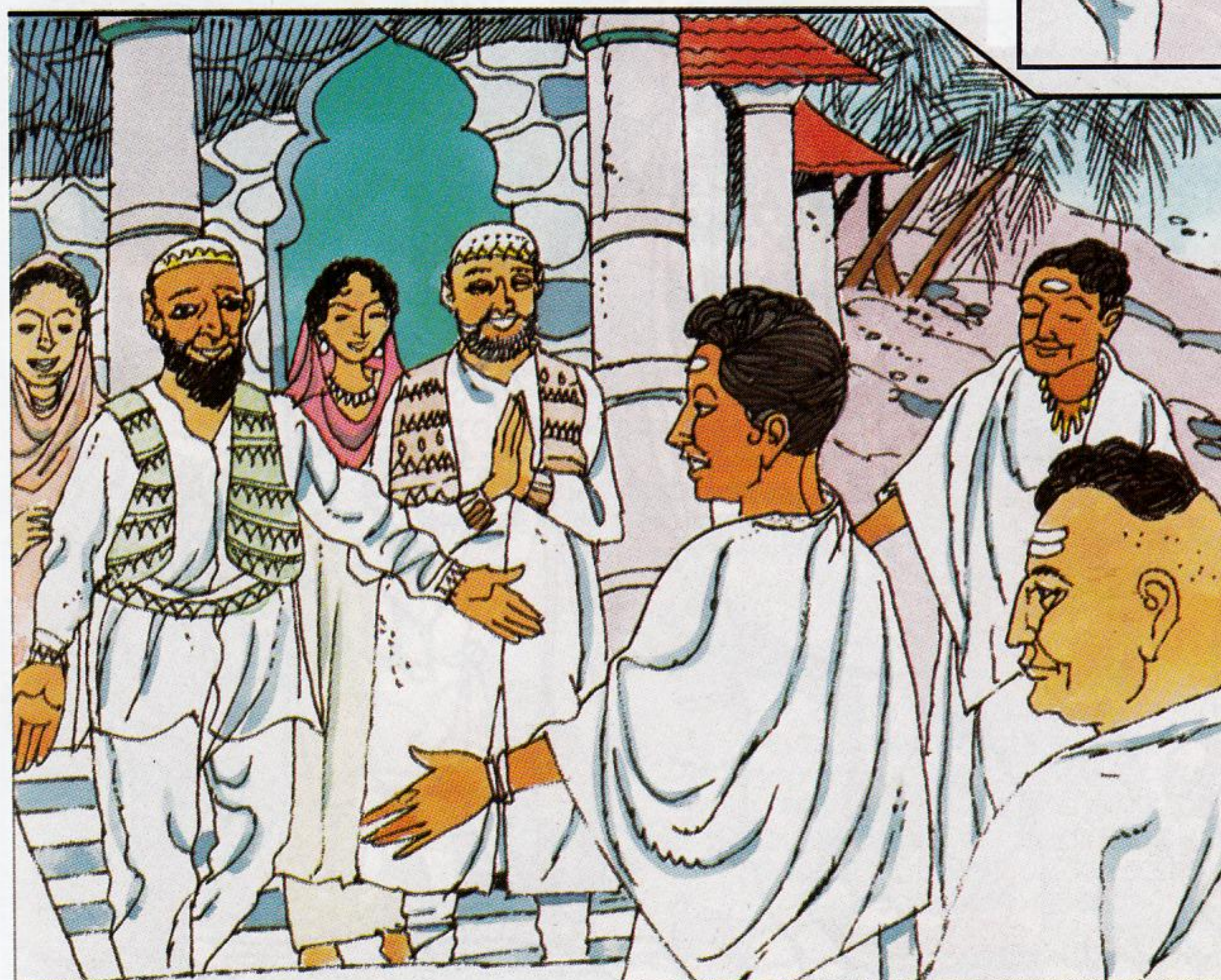
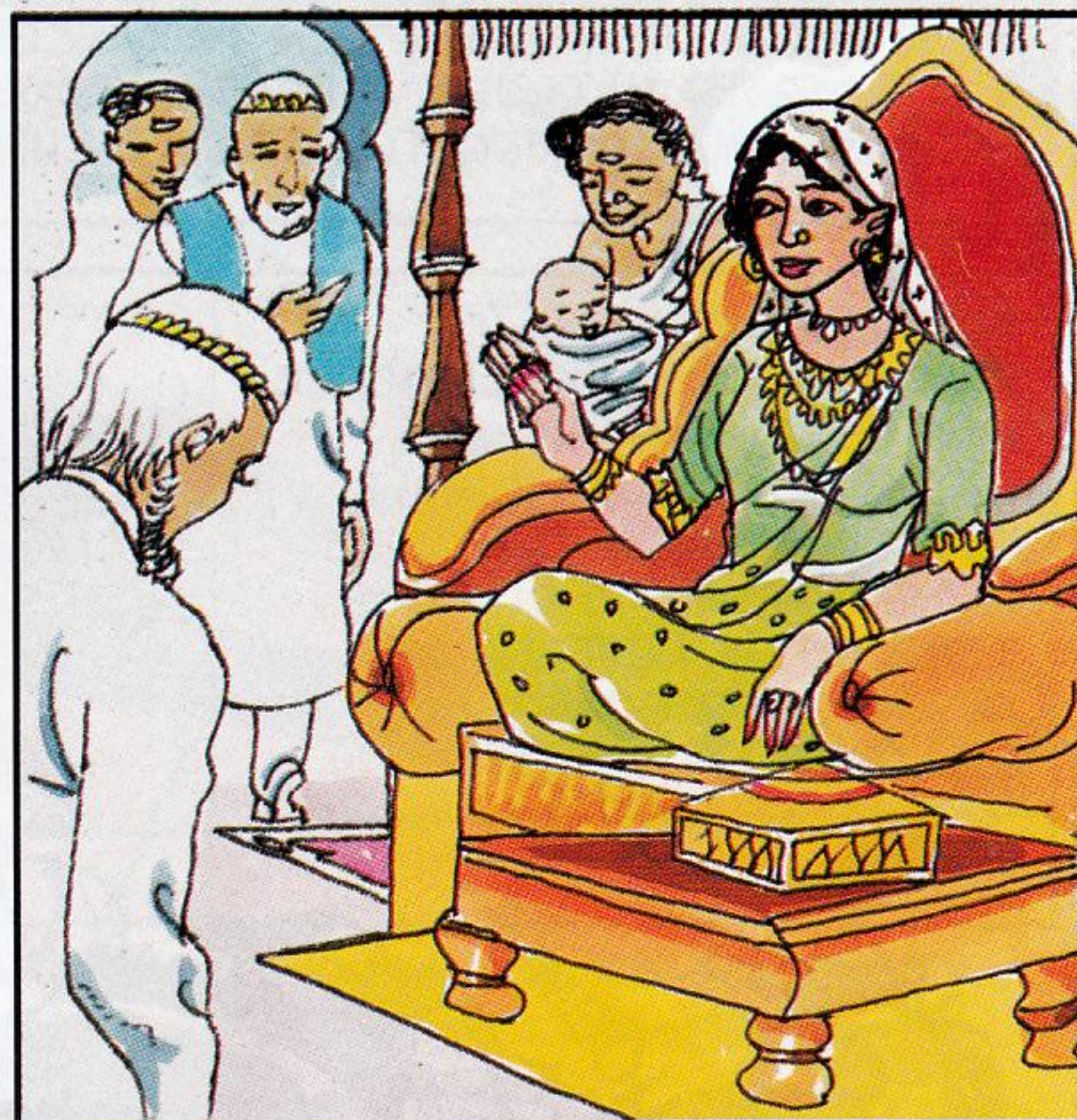
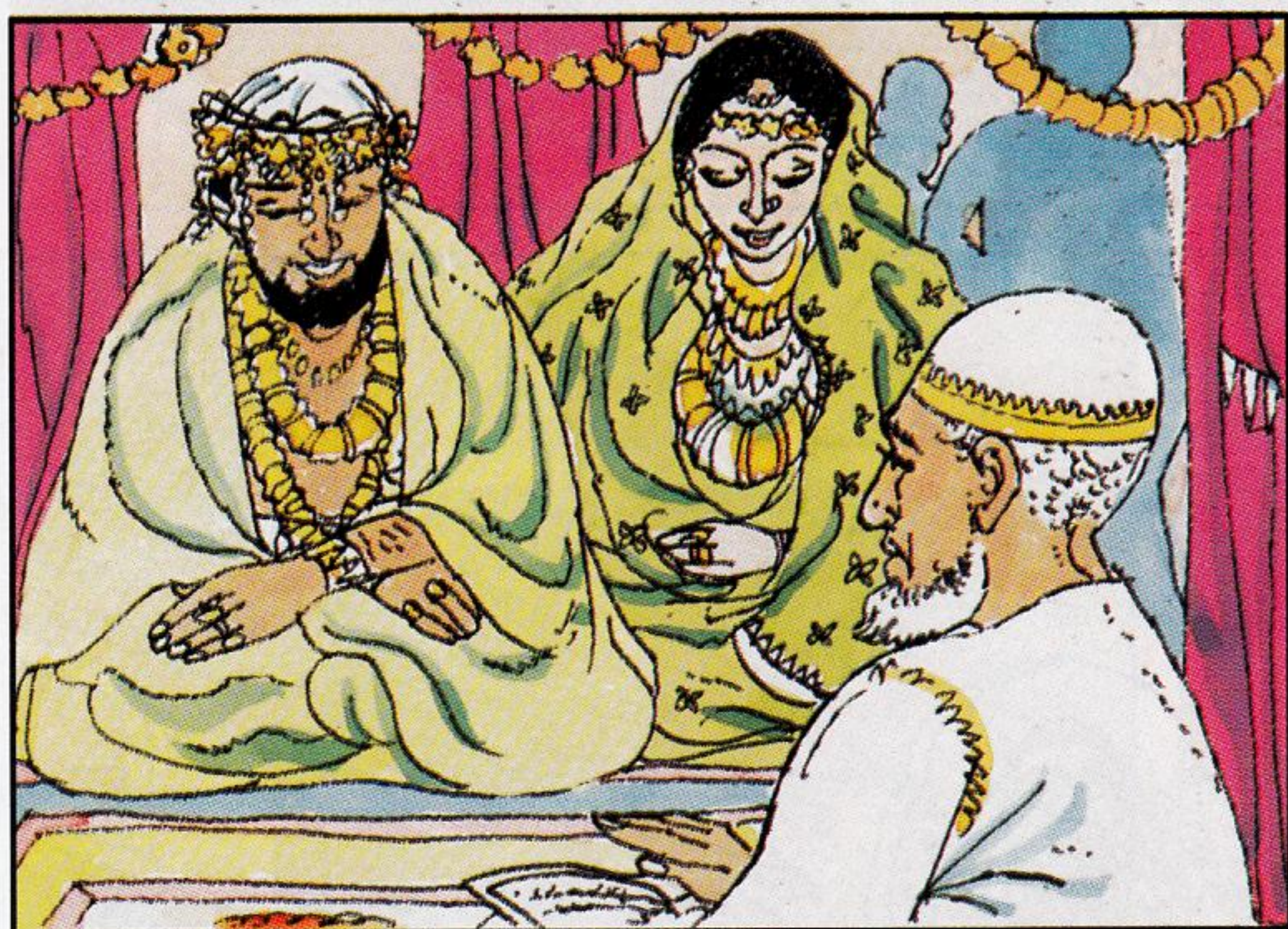








THUS DEAR READERS, THE PRINCESS AND THE MUSLIM YOUTH WERE MARRIED AS PER ISLAMIC RITES. FROM THAT DAY ONWARDS, SHE WAS KNOWN AS ARAKKAL BIBI. THE YOUNG MAN WAS WELL LOOKED AFTER BY BIBI'S FAMILY AS WAS THE CUSTOM. THE MANAGEMENT OF THE PROPERTY WAS IN BIBI'S HANDS IN KEEPING WITH THE TRADITION OF NAIR FAMILIES.



ARAKKAL BIBI WAS CLEVER AND EFFICIENT AND LOOKED AFTER EVERYTHING TO PERFECTION. THE MALE ISSUES BORN IN HER FAMILY WERE CALLED ARAKKAL KINGS. WE ALL KNOW THAT MUSLIM WOMEN KEEP PURDAH AND OTHER MEN WERE NOT ALLOWED TO SEE THEM. BUT HERE, THE TAMBURANS OF THE CHIRAKKAL FAMILY COULD MEET THE WOMEN OF ARAKKAL QUITE FREELY. WHEN THEY CAME, THE ARAKKAL KINGS RECEIVED THEM WITH GIFTS AND FANFARE. GRADUALLY, THE GLORY AND PROSPERITY OF THE ARAKKAL FAMILY INCREASED TO THE EXTENT THAT "HALF CHIRAKKAL IS ARAKKAL" BECAME A LOCAL SAYING.

THE END



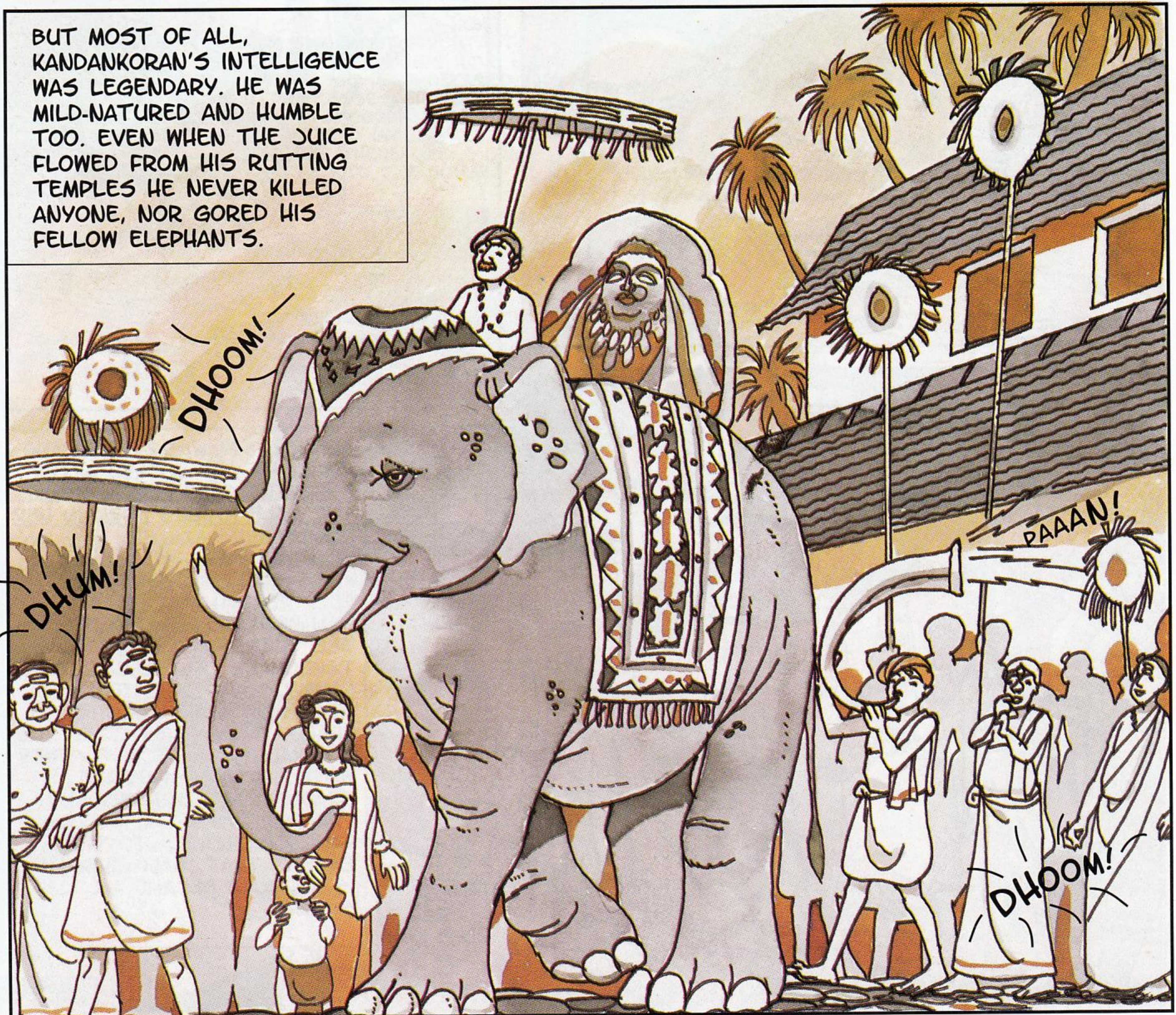
# KIDANGOOR KANDANKORAN



IN TRAVANCORE, IN THE DISTRICT OF ETTUMANOOR, IN KIDANGOOR PROVINCE, THERE IS A WELL KNOWN SUBRAMANIAN TEMPLE. THIS TEMPLE WAS OFFICIATED BY SOME NAMBOODIRIS OF THE KIDANGOOR VILLAGE.

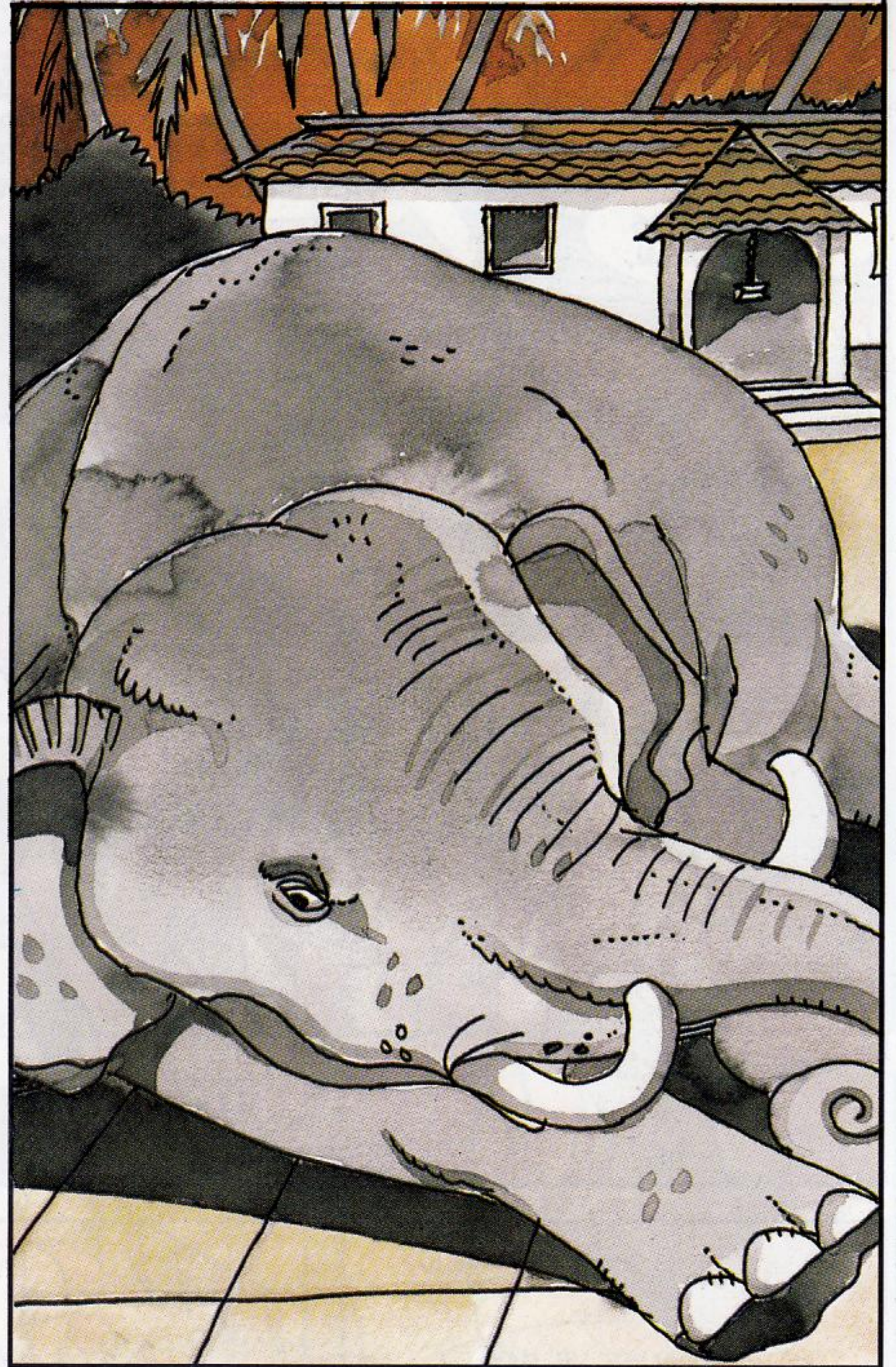
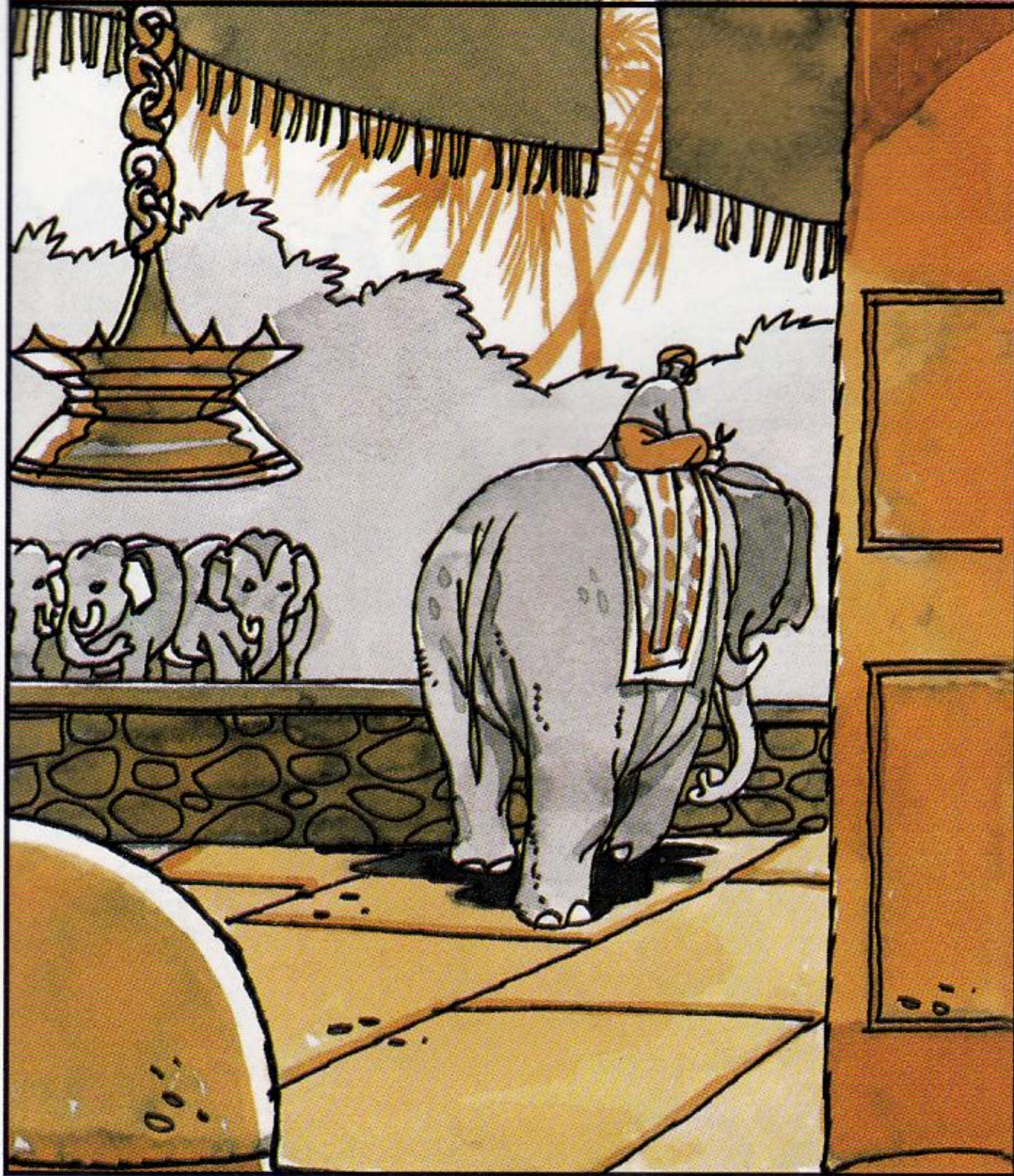
HERE DWELT A FAMOUS ELEPHANT, A TUSKER BY THE NAME OF KANDANKORAN. IN APPEARANCE AND NATURE HE WAS INCOMPARABLE! ANOTHER ELEPHANT LIKE HIM WAS NOT EVEN HEARD OF IN ANY OTHER PROVINCE! HE HAD A NOBLE HEAD WITH BEAUTIFUL TUSKS THAT CURVED IN FRONT. AND HOW GRAND HE LOOKED WHEN HE WALKED IN THE TEMPLE PROCESSION CARRYING THE DEITY ON HIS BACK!

BUT MOST OF ALL, KANDANKORAN'S INTELLIGENCE WAS LEGENDARY. HE WAS MILD-NATURED AND HUMBLE TOO. EVEN WHEN THE JUICE FLOWED FROM HIS RUTTING TEMPLES HE NEVER KILLED ANYONE, NOR GORED HIS FELLOW ELEPHANTS.

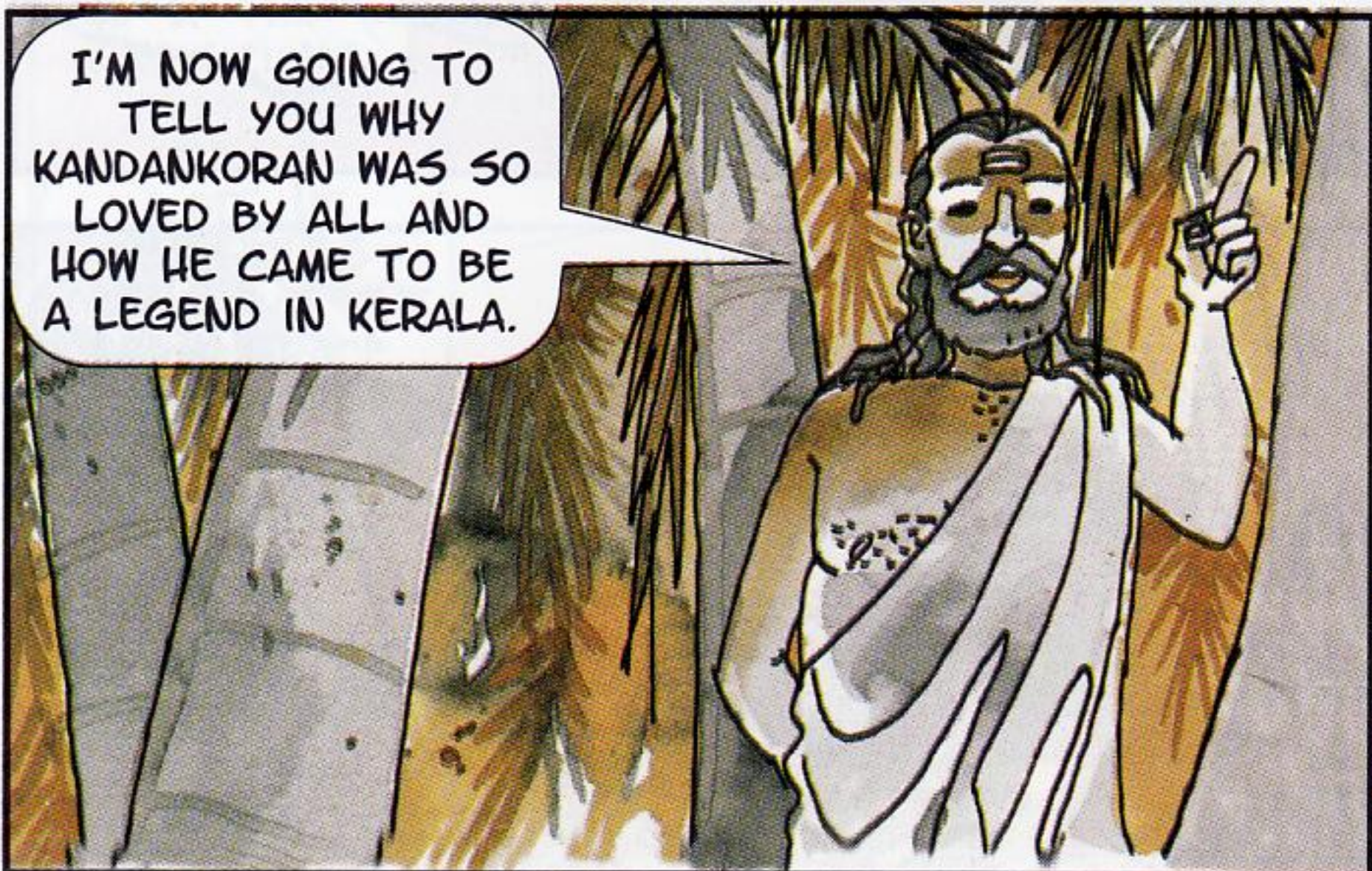




BUT DESPITE HIS REALLY AMIABLE MANNER, HE NEVER TOOK ORDERS FROM ANY OTHER MAHOUT EXCEPT HIS OWN. HE WAS NEVER FETTERED WITH ANKLE-BANGLES LIKE OTHER ORDINARY ELEPHANTS BUT ALLOWED TO ROAM AROUND FREELY. AT NIGHT HE WOULD FIND A RESTING PLACE AND GO TO SLEEP.



KANDANKORAN WAS KNOWN FOR HIS GENEROSITY...



I'M NOW GOING TO TELL YOU WHY KANDANKORAN WAS SO LOVED BY ALL AND HOW HE CAME TO BE A LEGEND IN KERALA.



THESE BUFFALOES THOUGH GOOD FRIENDS OF MINE, ARE QUITE SILLY! CAN'T THEY FEED FOR THEMSELVES? WHY DO THEY NEED **ME** TO ESCORT THEM TO THE SUGARCANE FIELDS? I GUESS BECAUSE WITHOUT ME THEY CAN'T BREAK THE FENCE AND GET INSIDE!

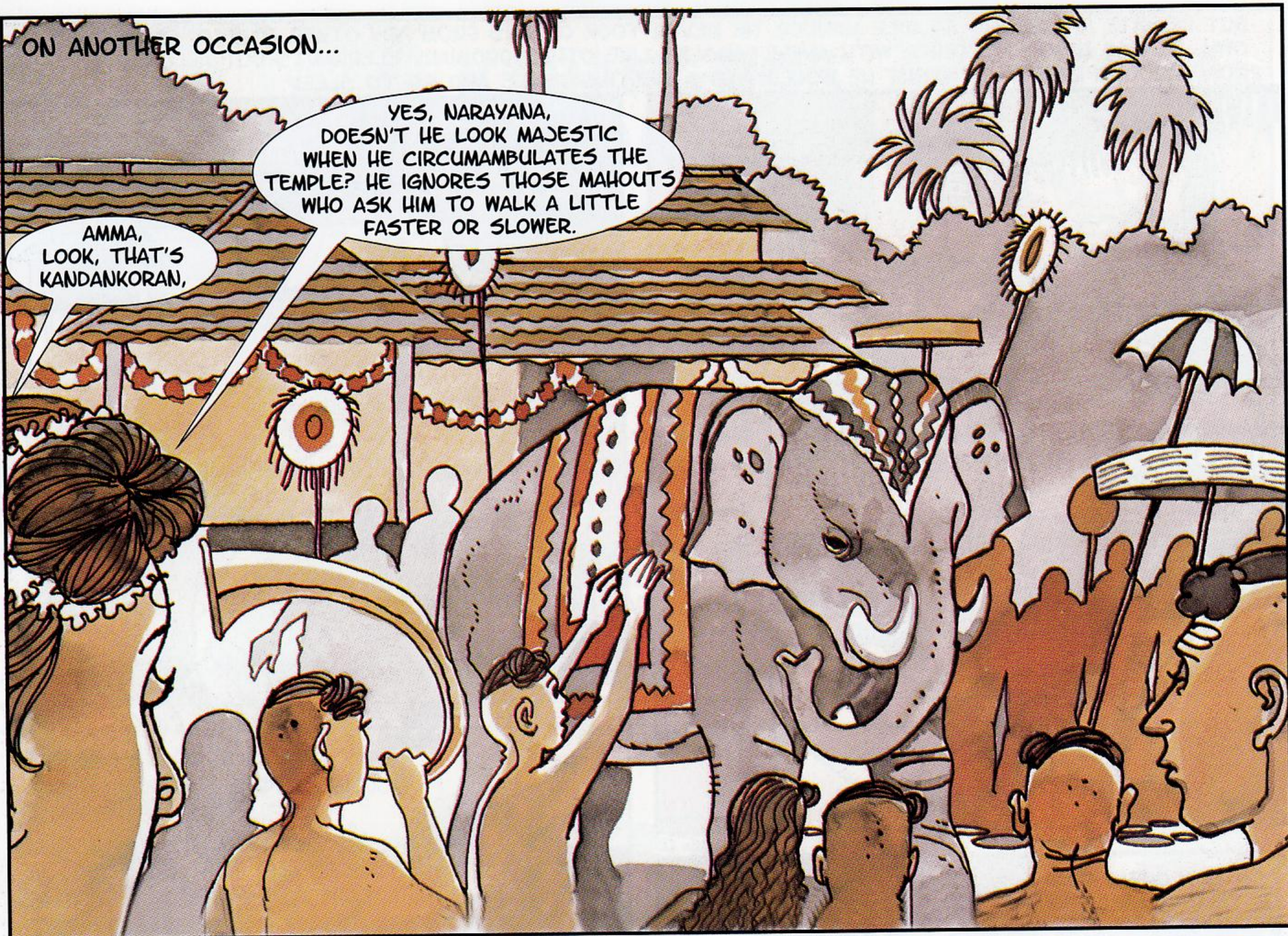
SWEET KANDANKORAN, EVERYTIME WE ARE HUNGRY HE ESCORTS US TO THE CANE FIELDS. BUT WHY CAN'T HE EVEN EAT **ONE** STICK OF CANE? HE JUST ENDS UP TAKING THE BLAME ON HIMSELF! THAT'S A GOOD FRIEND!



ON ANOTHER OCCASION...

AMMA,  
LOOK, THAT'S  
KANDANKORAN,

YES, NARAYANA,  
DOESN'T HE LOOK MAJESTIC  
WHEN HE CIRCUMAMBULATES THE  
TEMPLE? HE IGNORES THOSE MAHOUTS  
WHO ASK HIM TO WALK A LITTLE  
FASTER OR SLOWER.



WHY?

BECAUSE HE HAS  
A UNIQUE STYLE OF WALKING  
THAT KEEPS TO THE RHYTHM OF  
THE CHENDA<sup>1</sup> AND THE SONG OF  
THE NADASWARAM.<sup>2</sup> HE KNOWS  
WHERE TO STOP AND WHEN TO  
MOVE FASTER!

WOW!

AMMA  
SEE  
HOW HE  
FOLDS HIS  
LEGS WHEN  
THE DEITY  
HAS TO BE  
LIFTED  
ON HIS  
BACK!

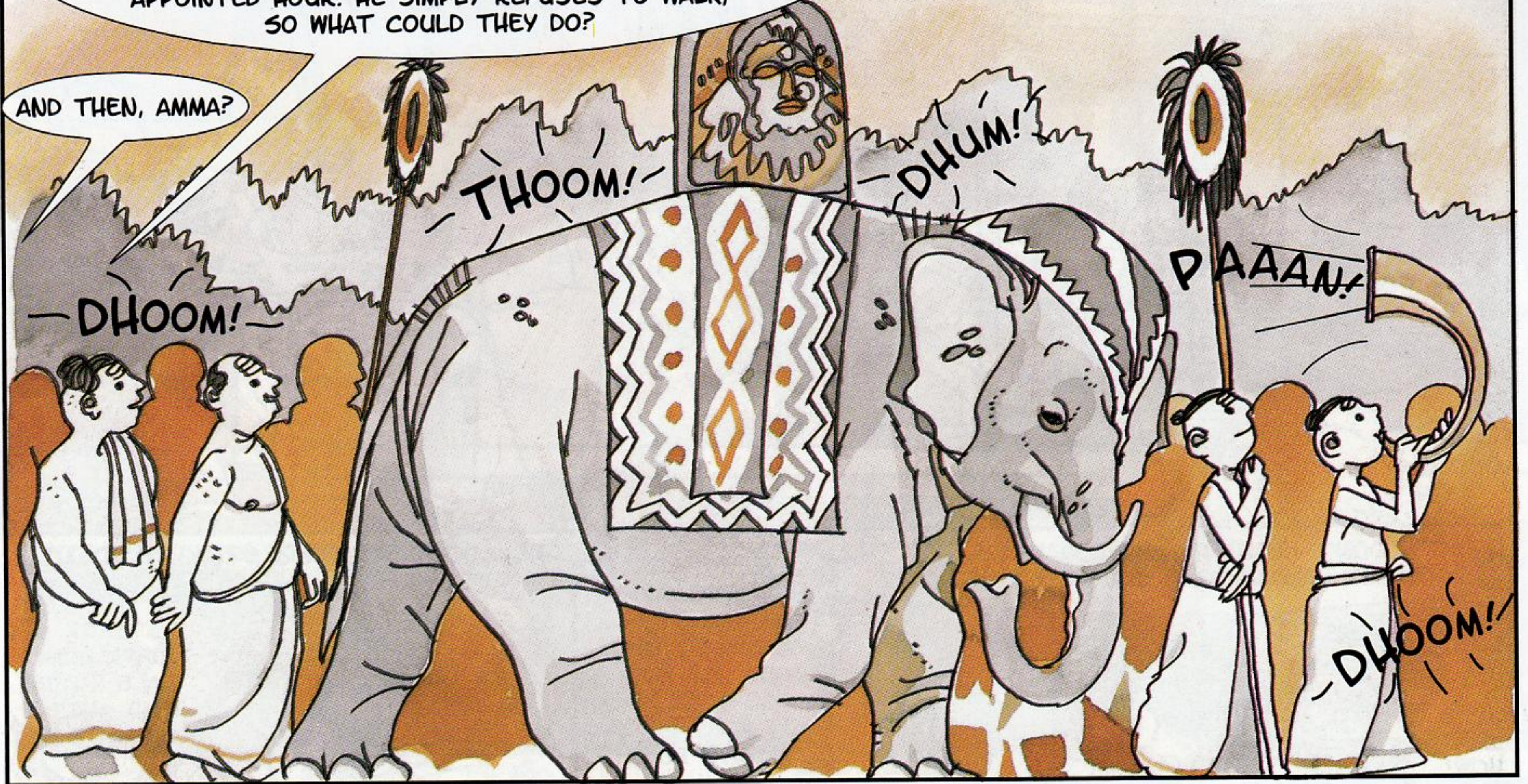


1. A big drum 2. A piped musical instrument

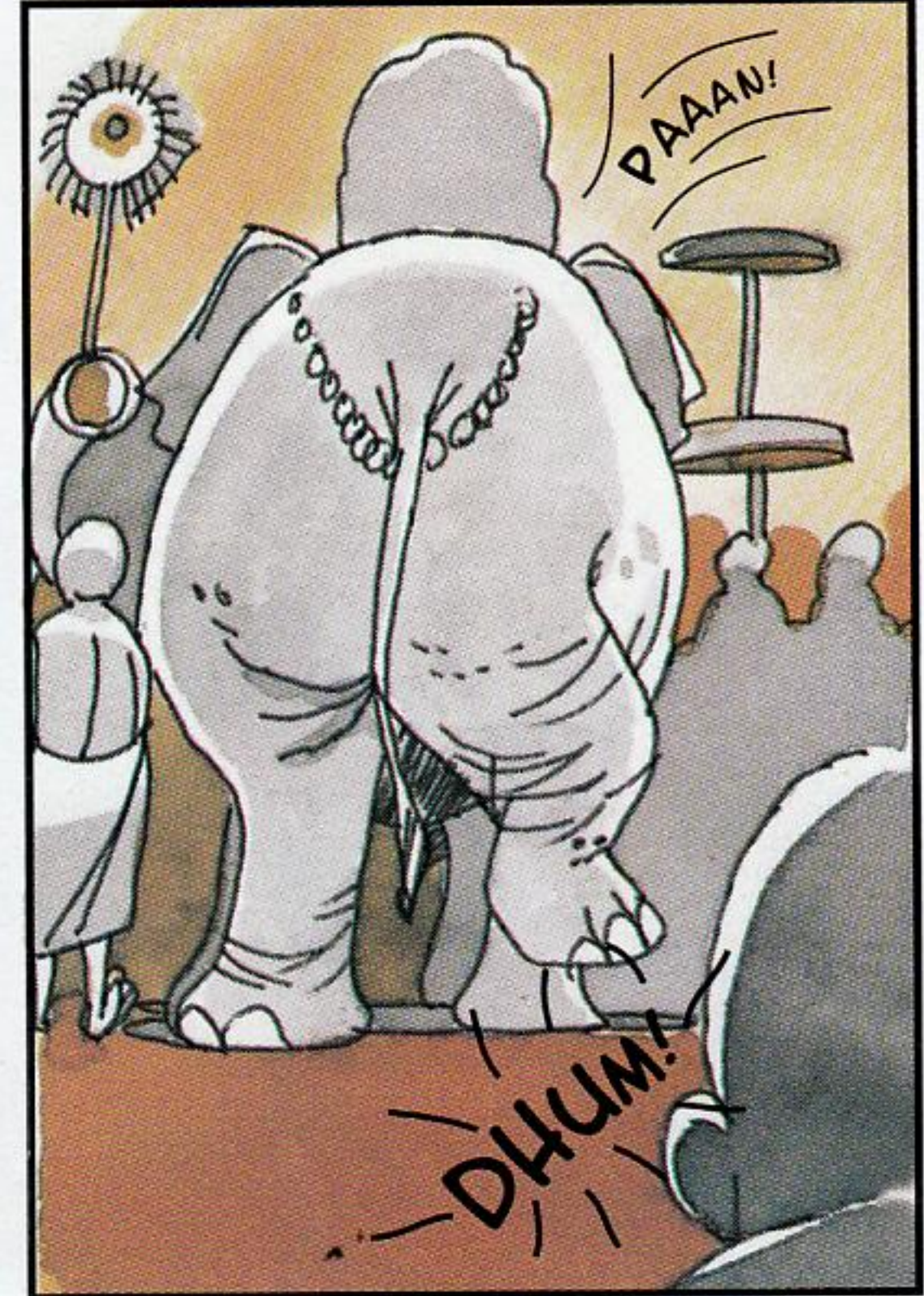
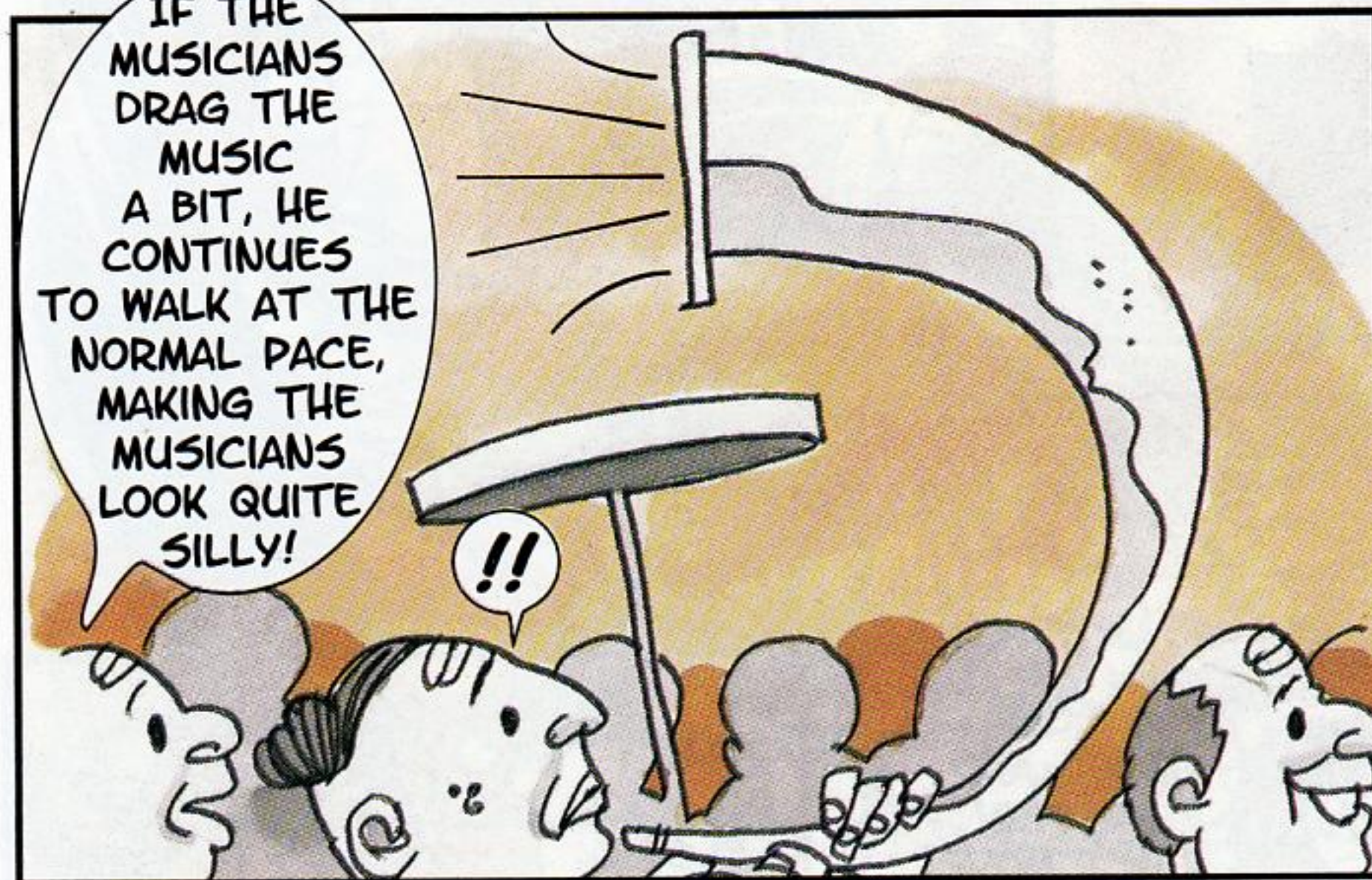


AND NOT JUST THAT, MONE,<sup>1</sup>  
ON FESTIVAL DAYS, HE WALKS SLOW ON THE SECOND DAY  
AND EVEN SLOWER ON THE THIRD, KEEPING IN MIND THE RISING  
EXCITEMENT AS THE DAYS PROGRESS. WHAT'S MORE,  
HE NEVER LETS THE TEMPLE RITUALS BEGIN **BEFORE** THE  
APPOINTED HOUR. HE SIMPLY REFUSES TO WALK,  
SO WHAT COULD THEY DO?

AND THEN, AMMA?

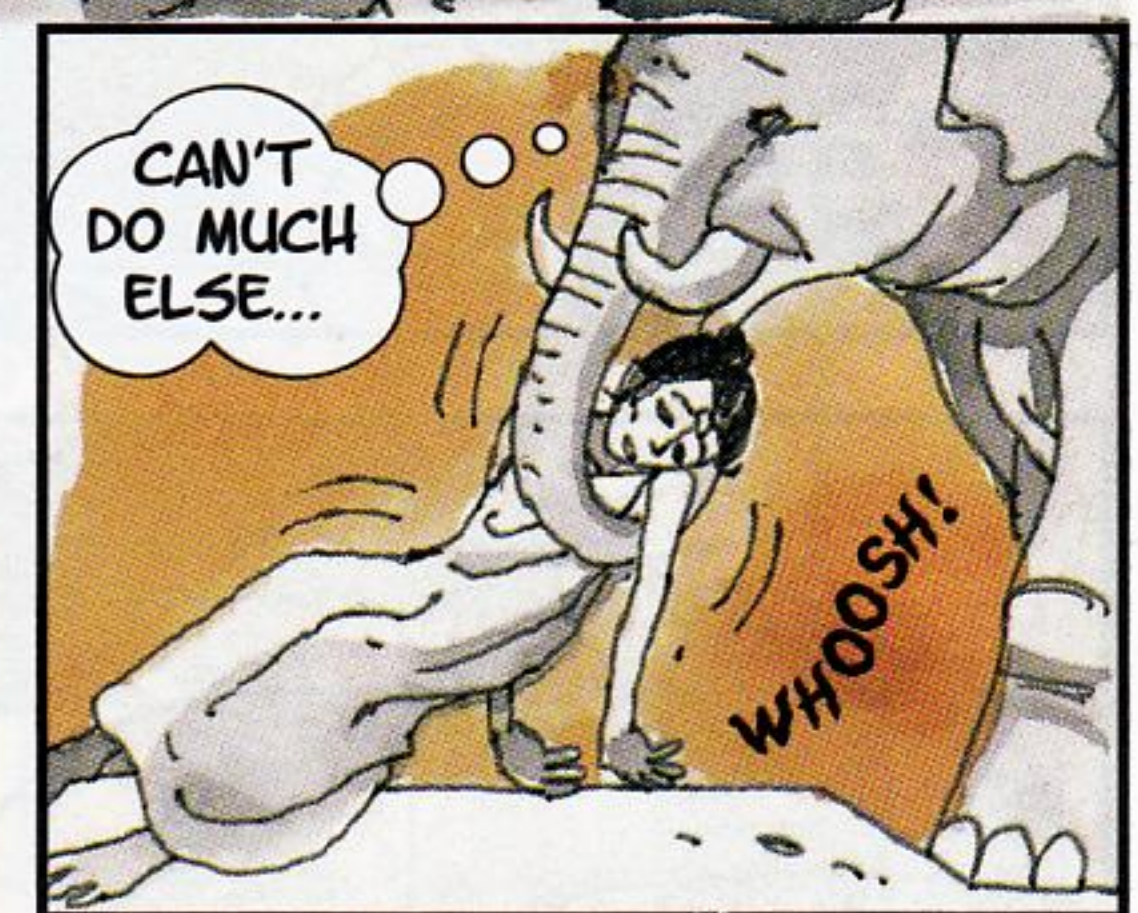
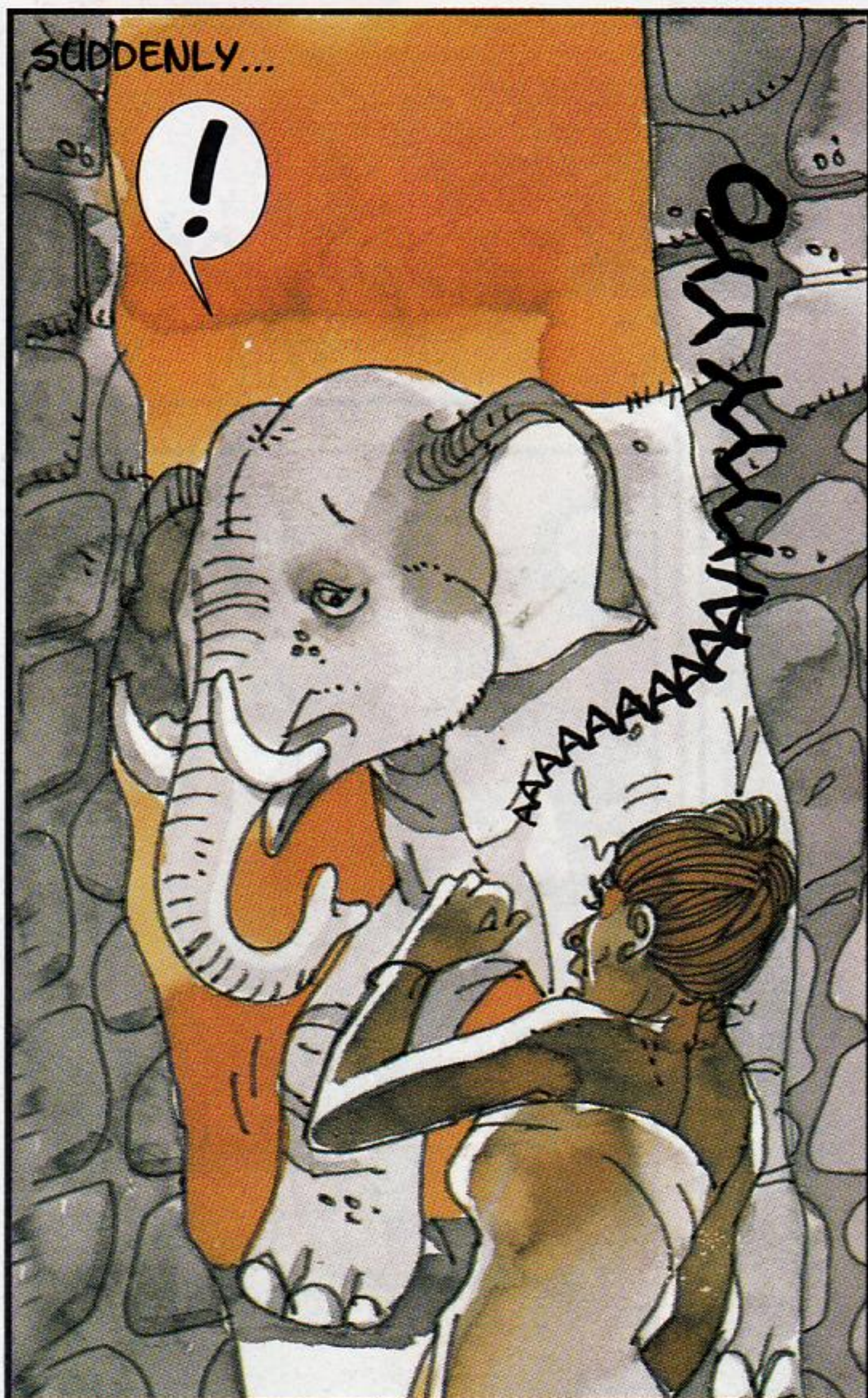
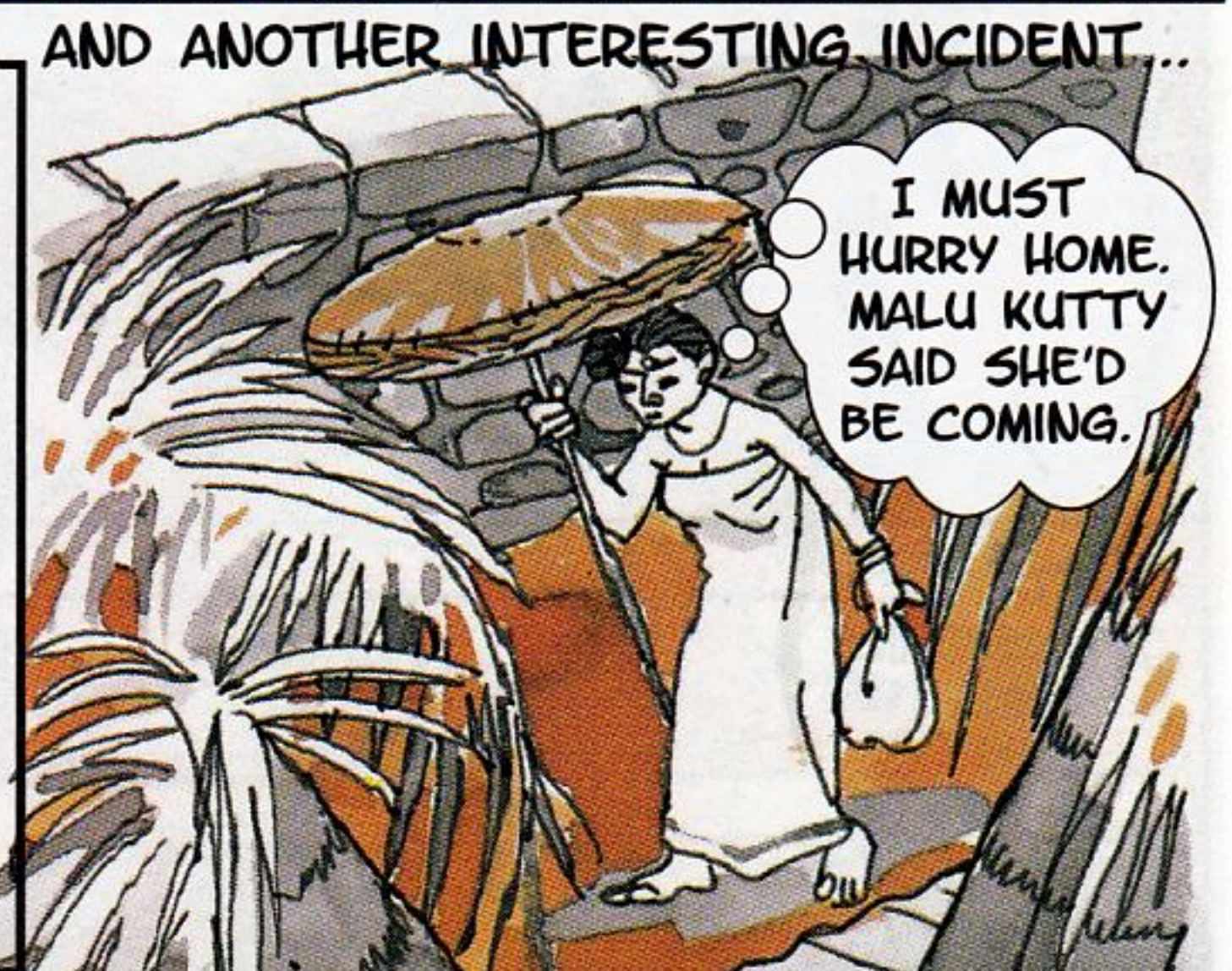
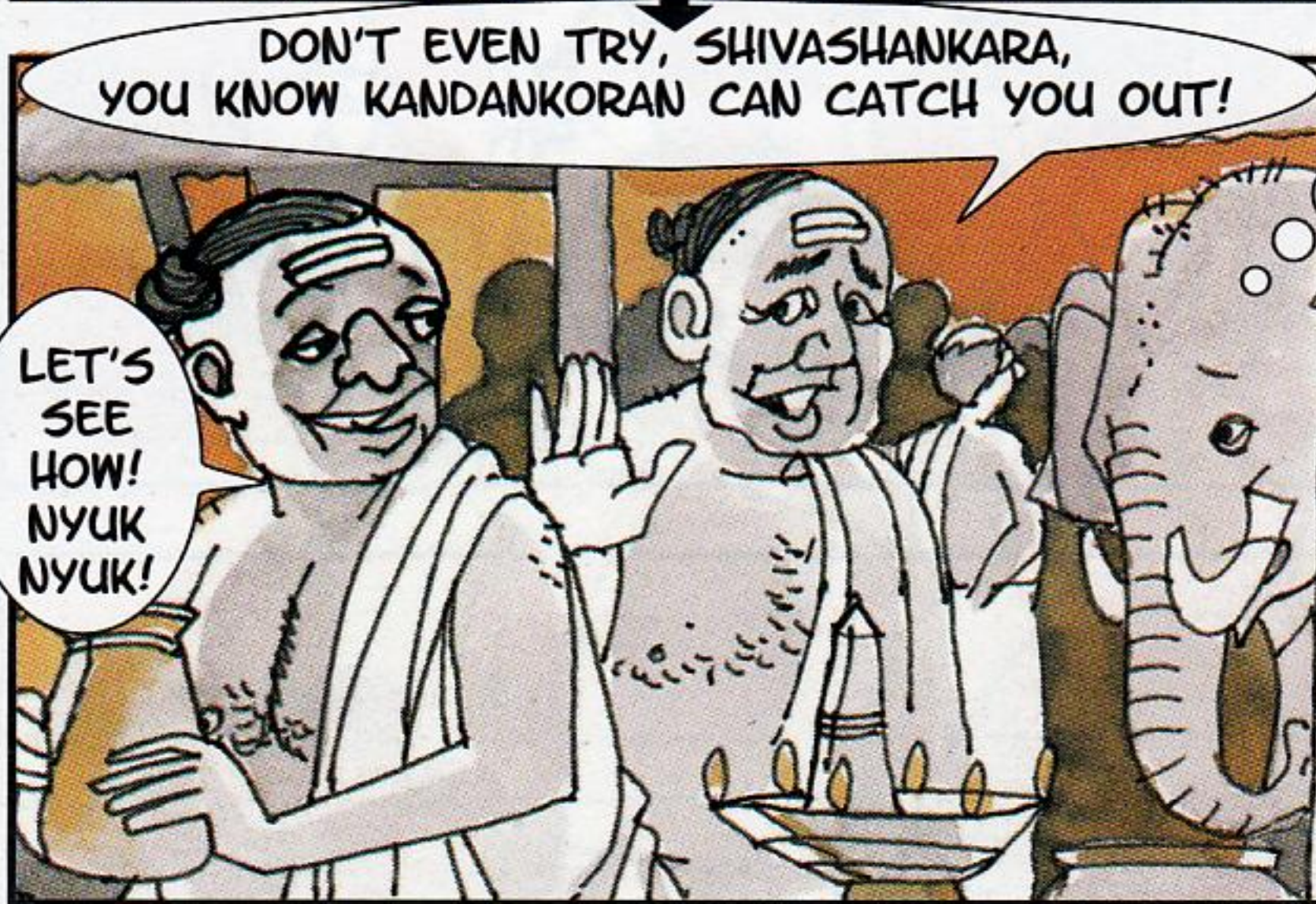


IF THE  
MUSICIANS  
DRAG THE  
MUSIC  
A BIT, HE  
CONTINUES  
TO WALK AT THE  
NORMAL PACE,  
MAKING THE  
MUSICIANS  
LOOK QUITE  
SILLY!



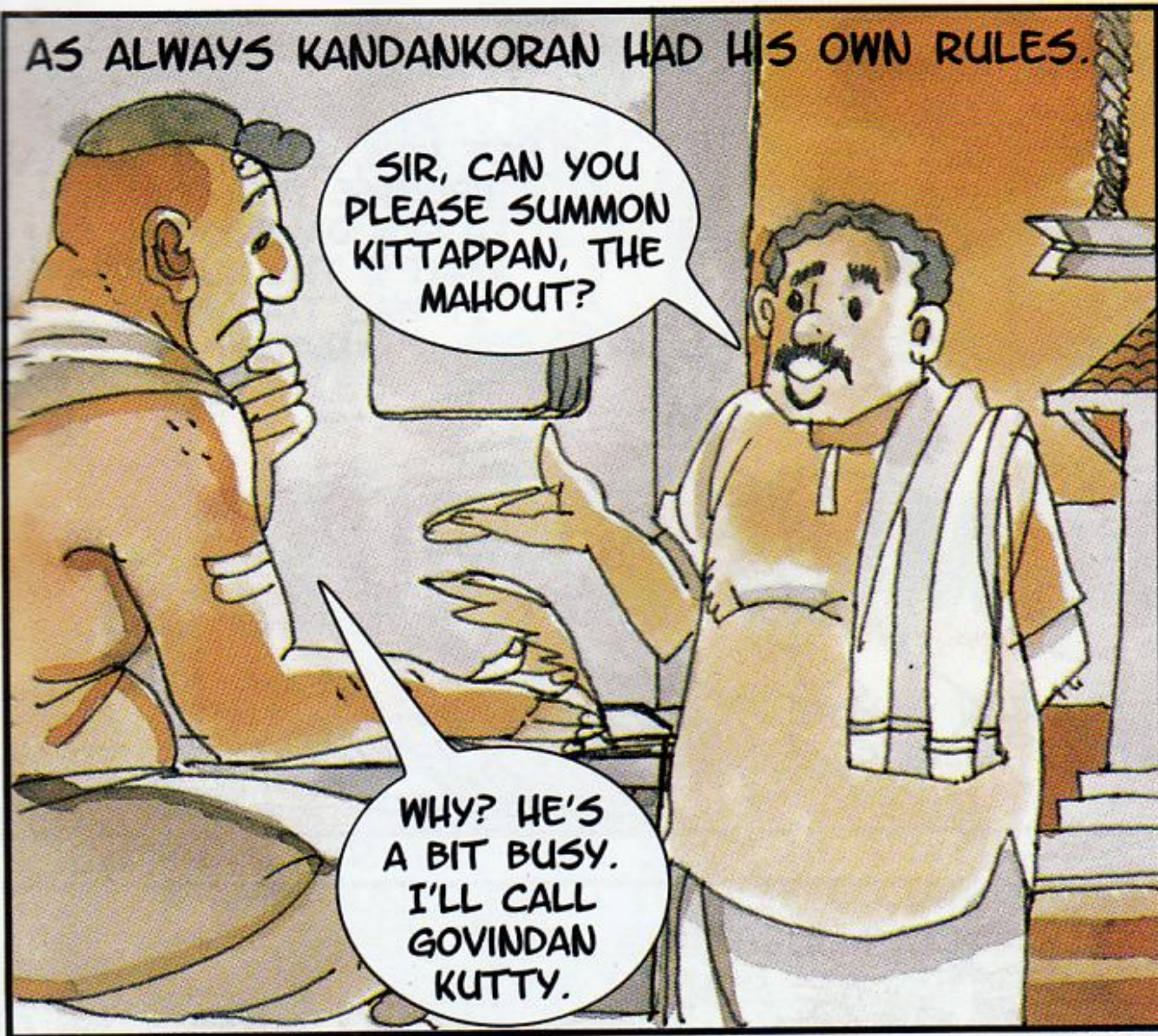


ON EACH FESTIVAL DAY, A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF COCONUT OIL WAS USED IN THE LAMPS TO COINCIDE EXACTLY WITH THE CULMINATION OF THE PROCESSION. IF A LITTLE EXTRA WAS USED IT WAS VISIBLE. LIKEWISE IF IT WAS A LITTLE LESS. SO PRECISE WERE KANDANKORAN'S STEPS! ANY FALSE ACCOUNTING FOR THE OIL WAS THEREFORE IMPOSSIBLE! KANDANKORAN WOULD NEVER MAKE AN ERROR, THAT WAS CERTAIN!



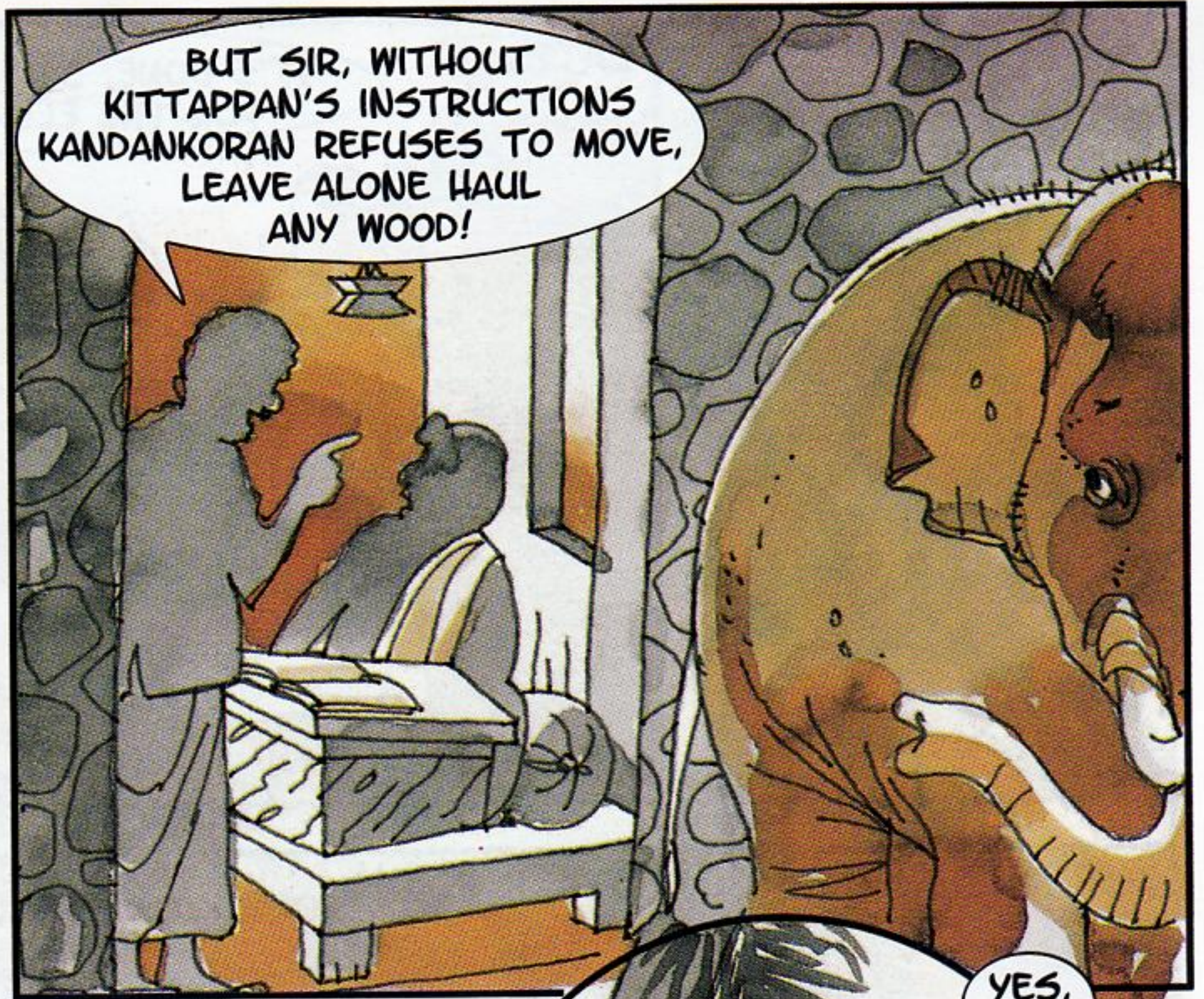


AS ALWAYS KANDANKORAN HAD HIS OWN RULES.



SIR, CAN YOU PLEASE SUMMON KITTAPPAN, THE MAHOUT?

WHY? HE'S A BIT BUSY. I'LL CALL GOVINDAN KUTTY.



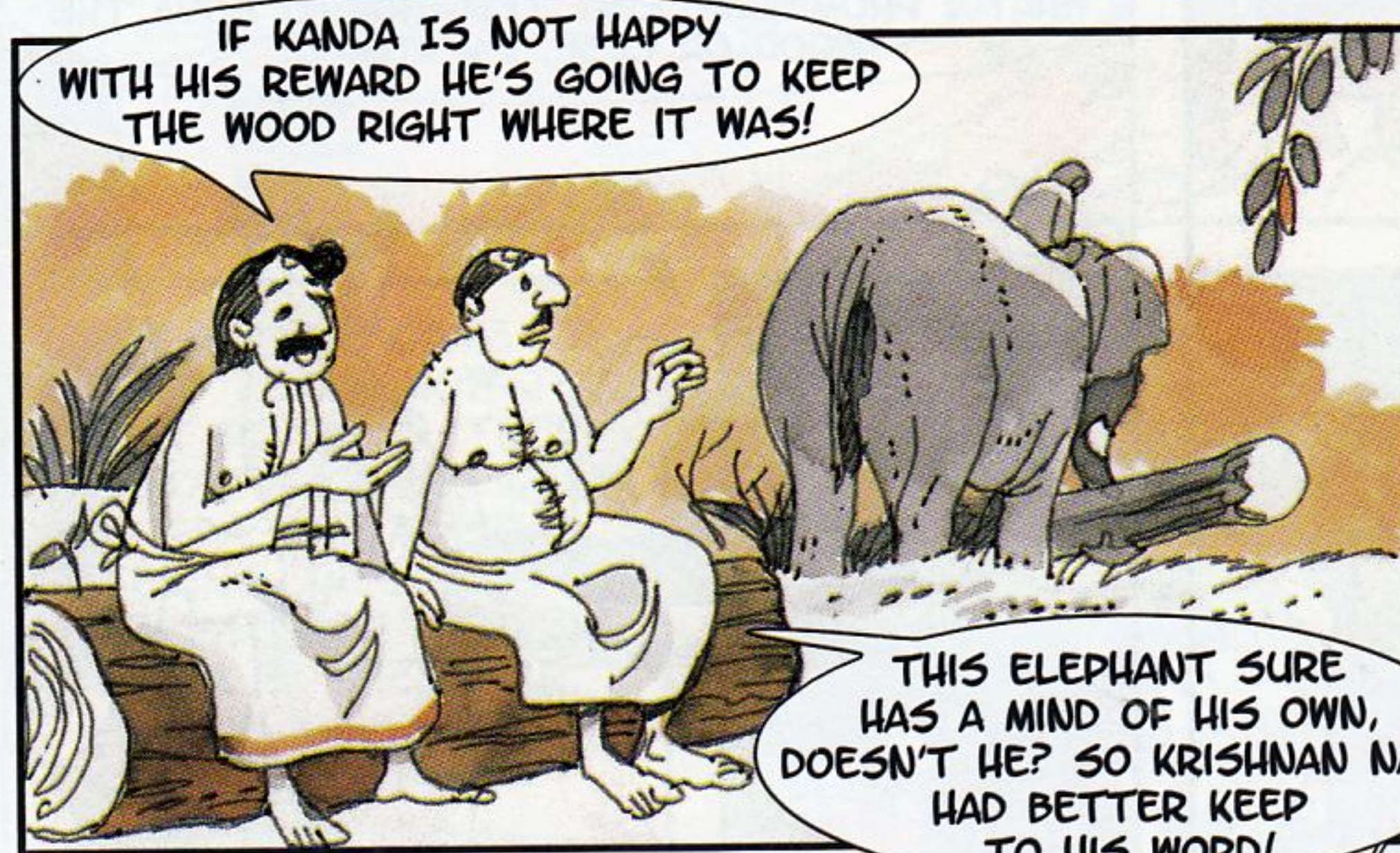
BUT SIR, WITHOUT KITTAPPAN'S INSTRUCTIONS KANDANKORAN REFUSES TO MOVE, LEAVE ALONE HAUL ANY WOOD!



KANDA, HURRY! YOU'LL GET YOUR TREAT ONCE YOU FINISH!

CLAP! CLAP!

YES, I'D BETTER!



IF KANDA IS NOT HAPPY WITH HIS REWARD HE'S GOING TO KEEP THE WOOD RIGHT WHERE IT WAS!

THIS ELEPHANT SURE HAS A MIND OF HIS OWN, DOESN'T HE? SO KRISHNAN NAIR HAD BETTER KEEP TO HIS WORD!



ONCE...

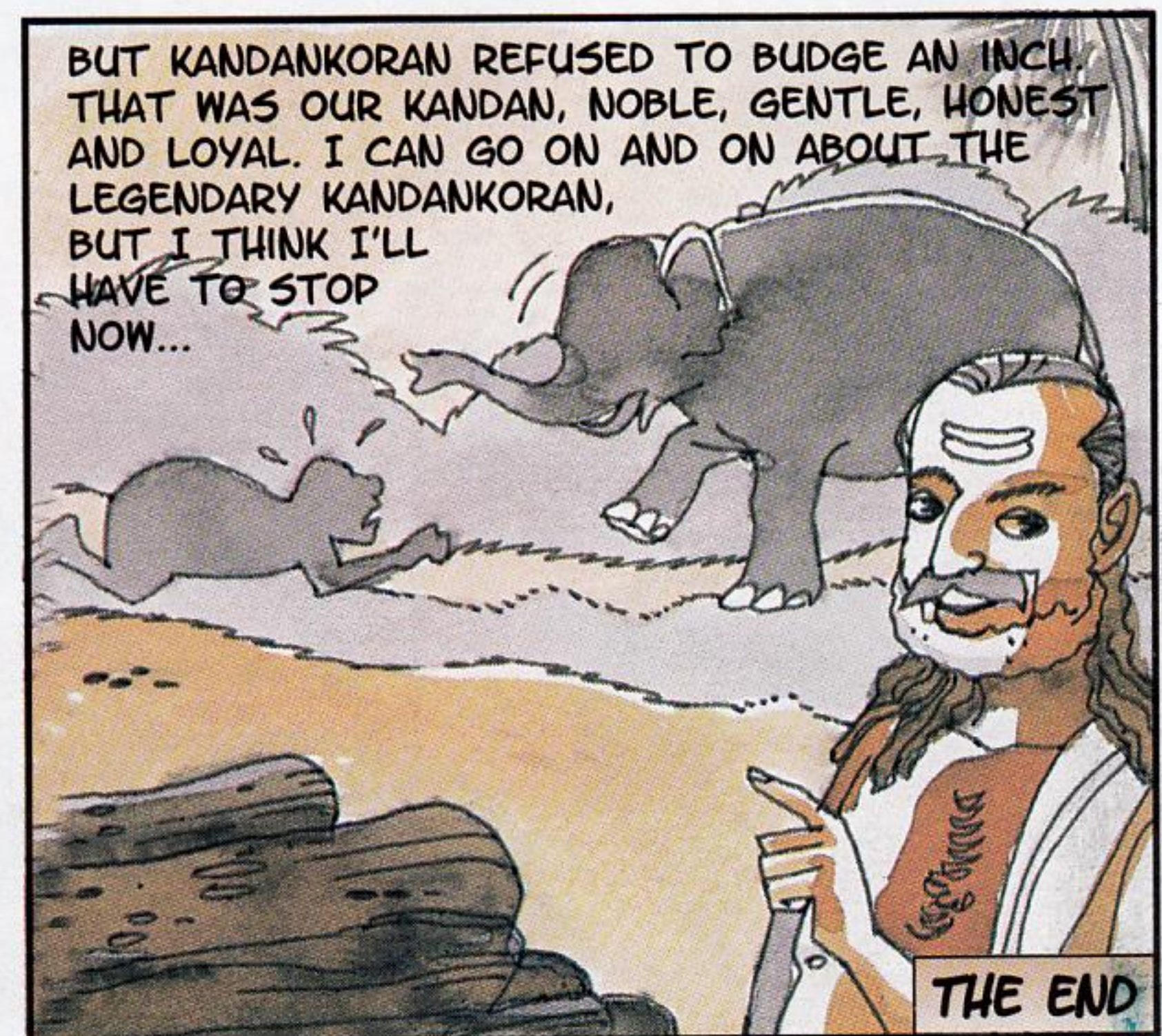
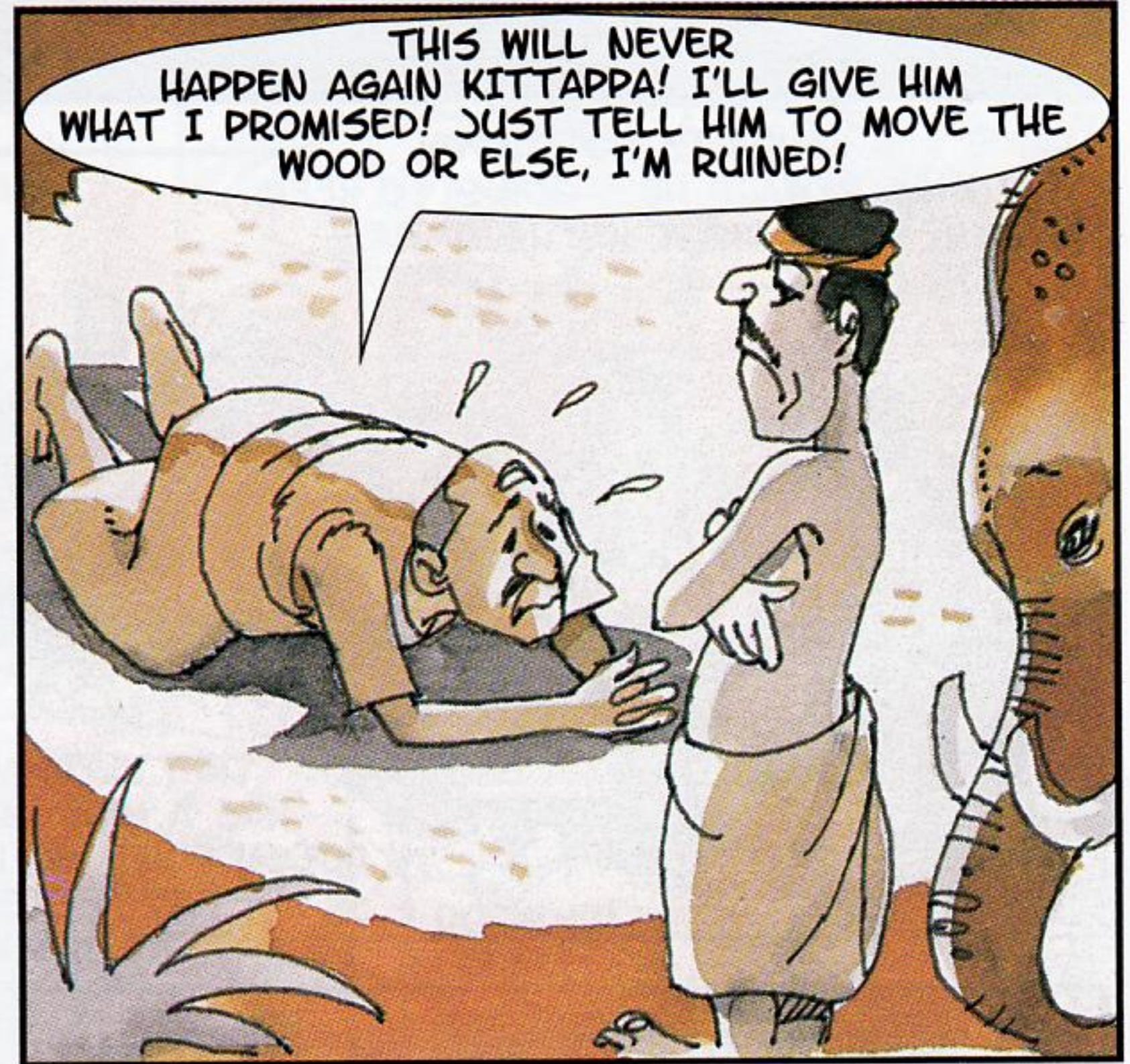
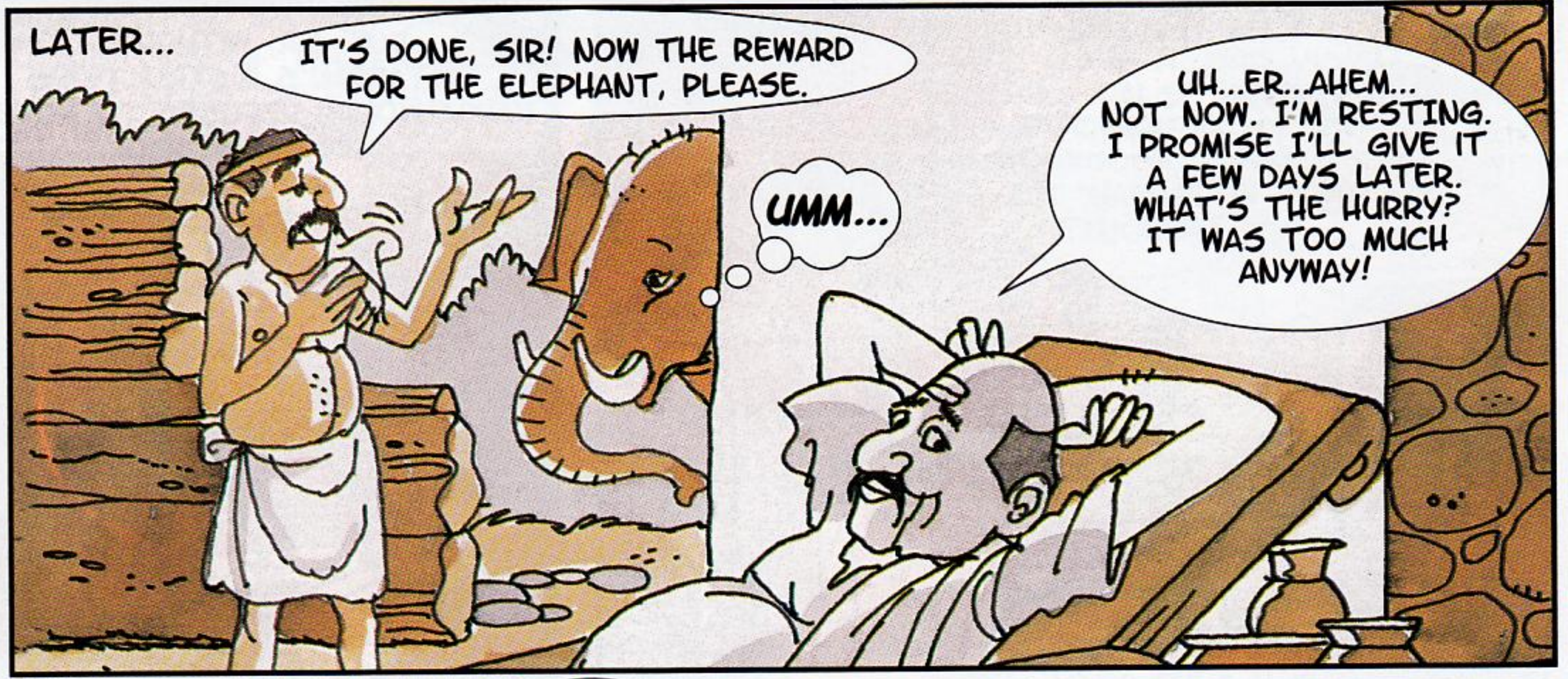
THESE HUGE LOGS OF WOOD?! WHAT WILL YOU GIVE KANDANKORAN FOR THIS?

TEN BUNCHES OF BANANAS, TEN COCONUTS, AND ABOUT TWENTY EIGHT POUNDS OF JAGGERY, I PROMISE, KITTAPPA.



HMMM... DELICIOUS!





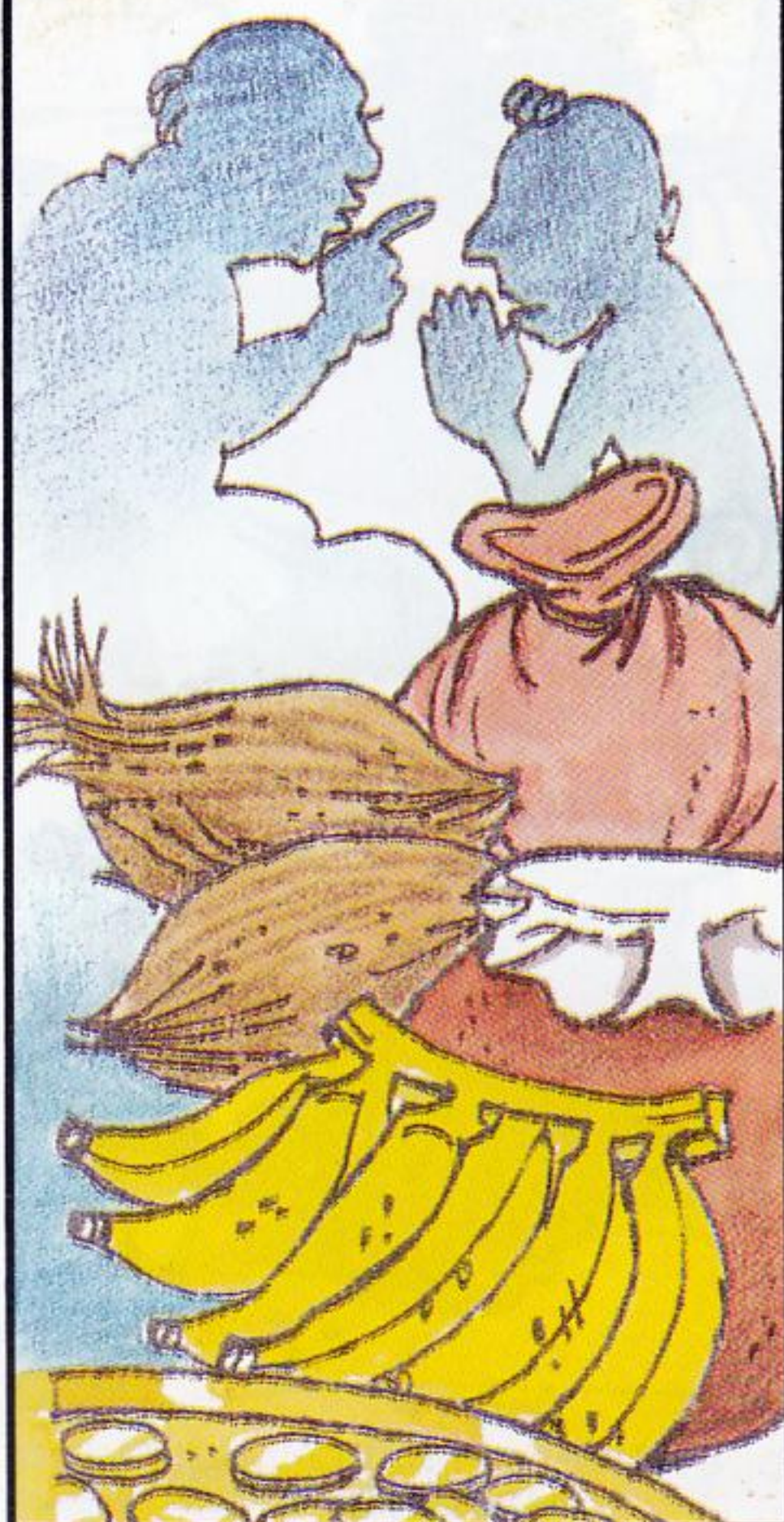


# STUPID PUMPKINS!

ONCE, IN KOZHIKODE, LIVED A FAMOUS VAIDYAN WHO TREATED POISONS. HE WAS THE DISCIPLE OF KARATTU NAMBOODIRI. PATIENTS, WITH THEIR HANDS FOLDED AND HOPE IN THEIR EYES USED TO COME TO HIM FROM FAR AND WIDE SINCE HE NEVER LEFT HIS HOME. THEY WOULD OFFER HIM MONEY WHEN THEY GOT CURED, BUT HE WOULD ALWAYS REFUSE. DESPITE THAT, GRATEFUL PATIENTS ALWAYS FOUND SOME WAY OF GIVING HIM MONEY, EITHER SURREPTITIOUSLY LEAVING IT IN SOME CORNER OF THE HOUSE OR HANDING IT OVER TO HIS FAITHFUL SERVANT. SO, IN COURSE OF TIME, HE BECAME VERY WEALTHY.



MANY PEOPLE CAME TO HIM TO LEARN HOW TO TREAT POISONS. THEY WOULD TOUCH HIS FEET AND GIVE HIM THEIR OFFERING. HE WOULD THEN WHISPER A DIVINE MANTRA IN THEIR EAR.



IN A SMALL DWELLING ON THE EASTERN SIDE OF THE VAIDYAN'S HOUSE, LIVED A STRONG AND DARK-SKINNED LAD CALLED KOCHURAMAN. HE WAS SO POOR THAT SOMETIMES HE WENT TO SLEEP WITHOUT ANY FOOD, CLUTCHING HIS STOMACH IN HUNGER. ONE DAY...



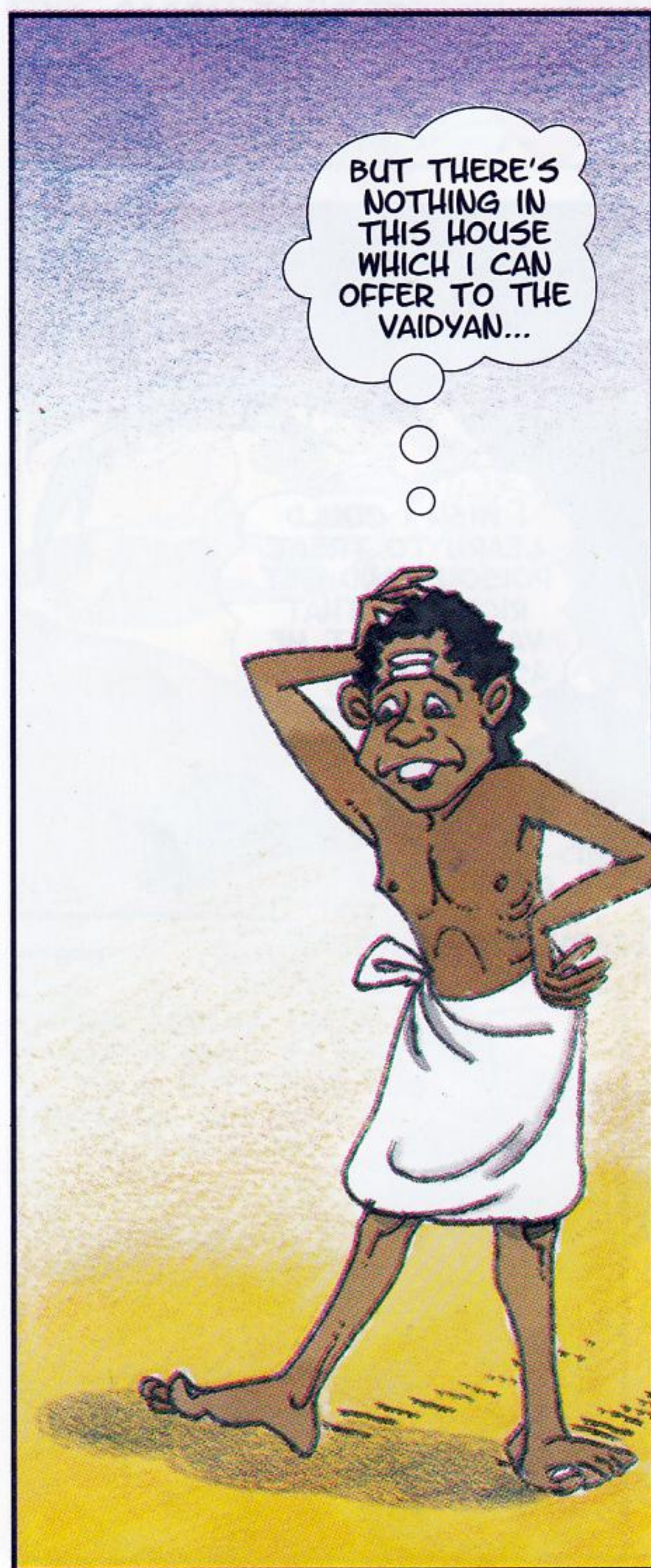
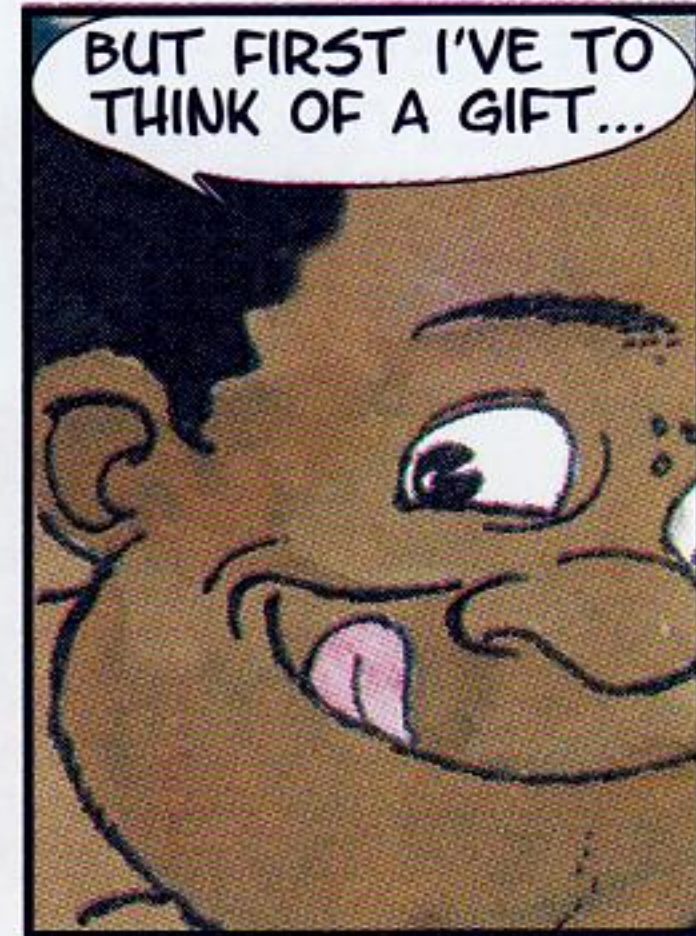
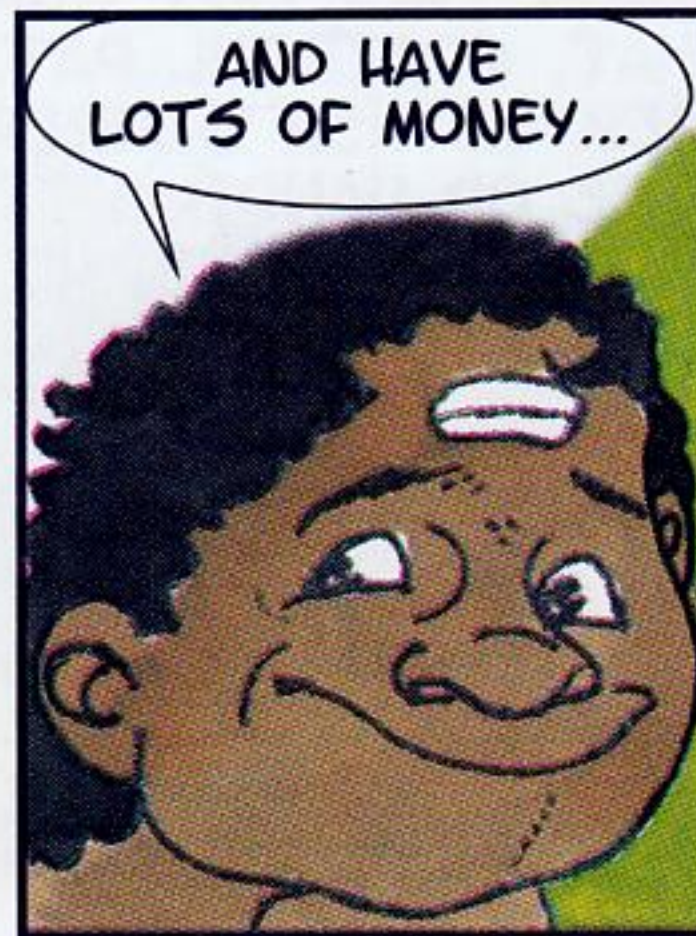
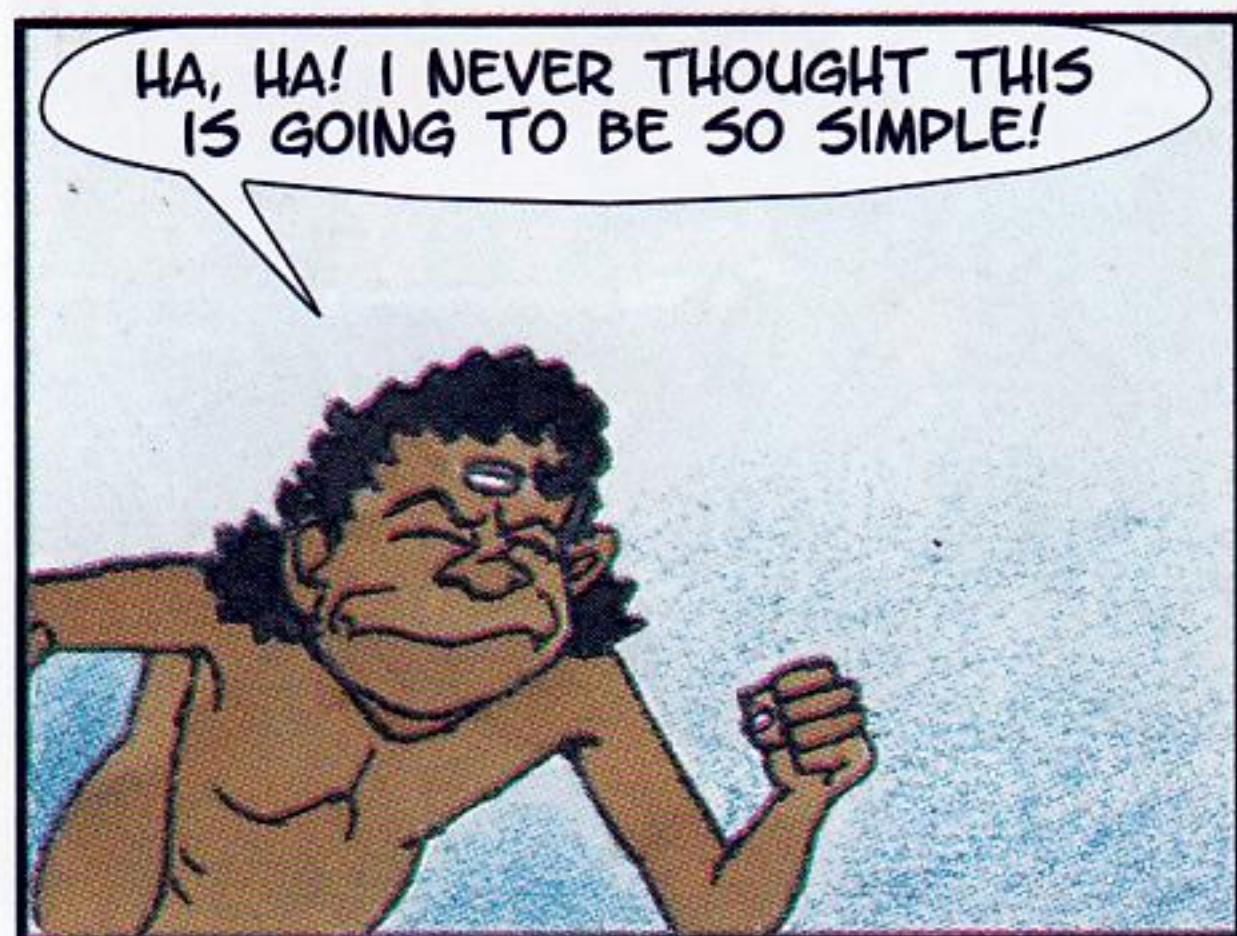
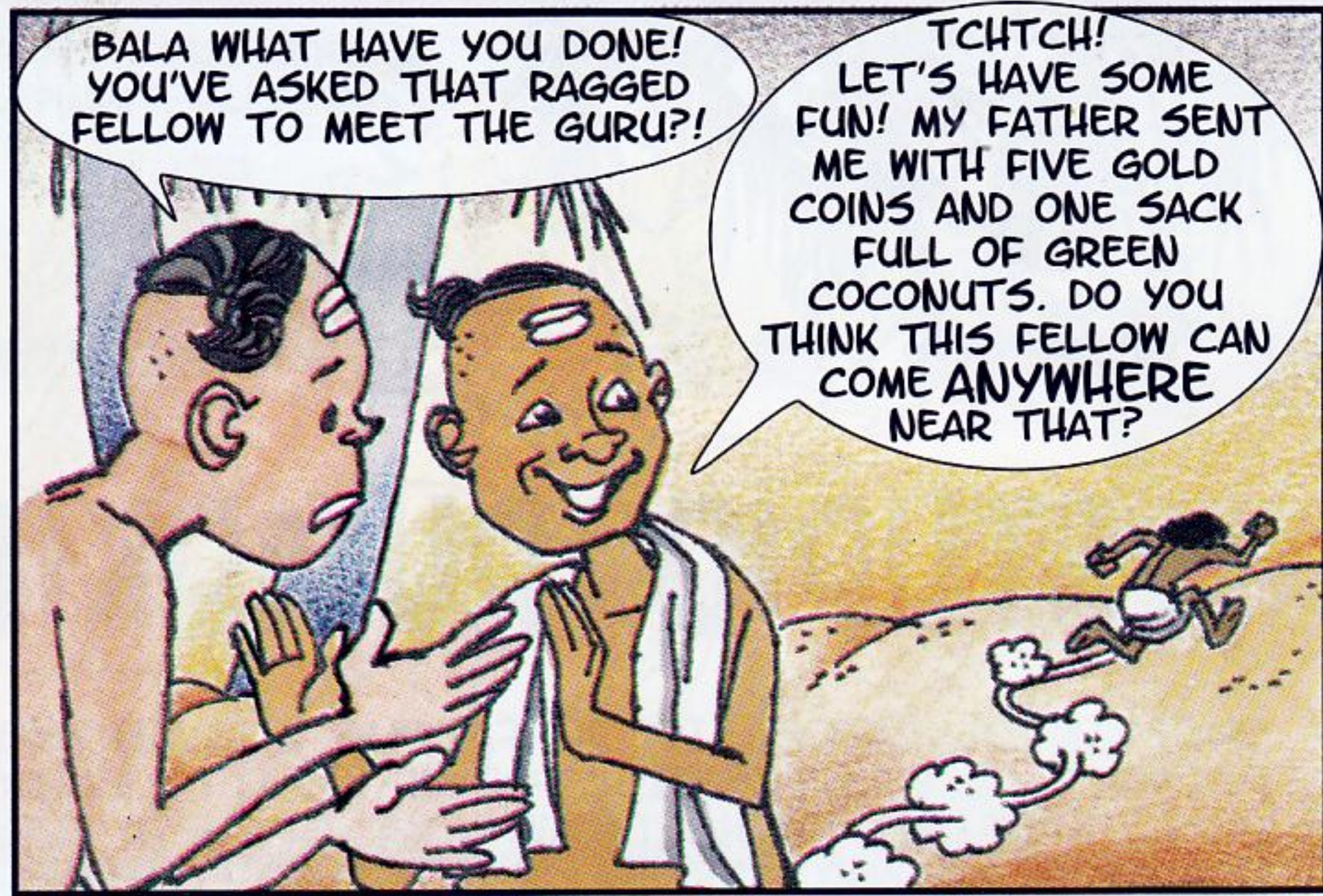
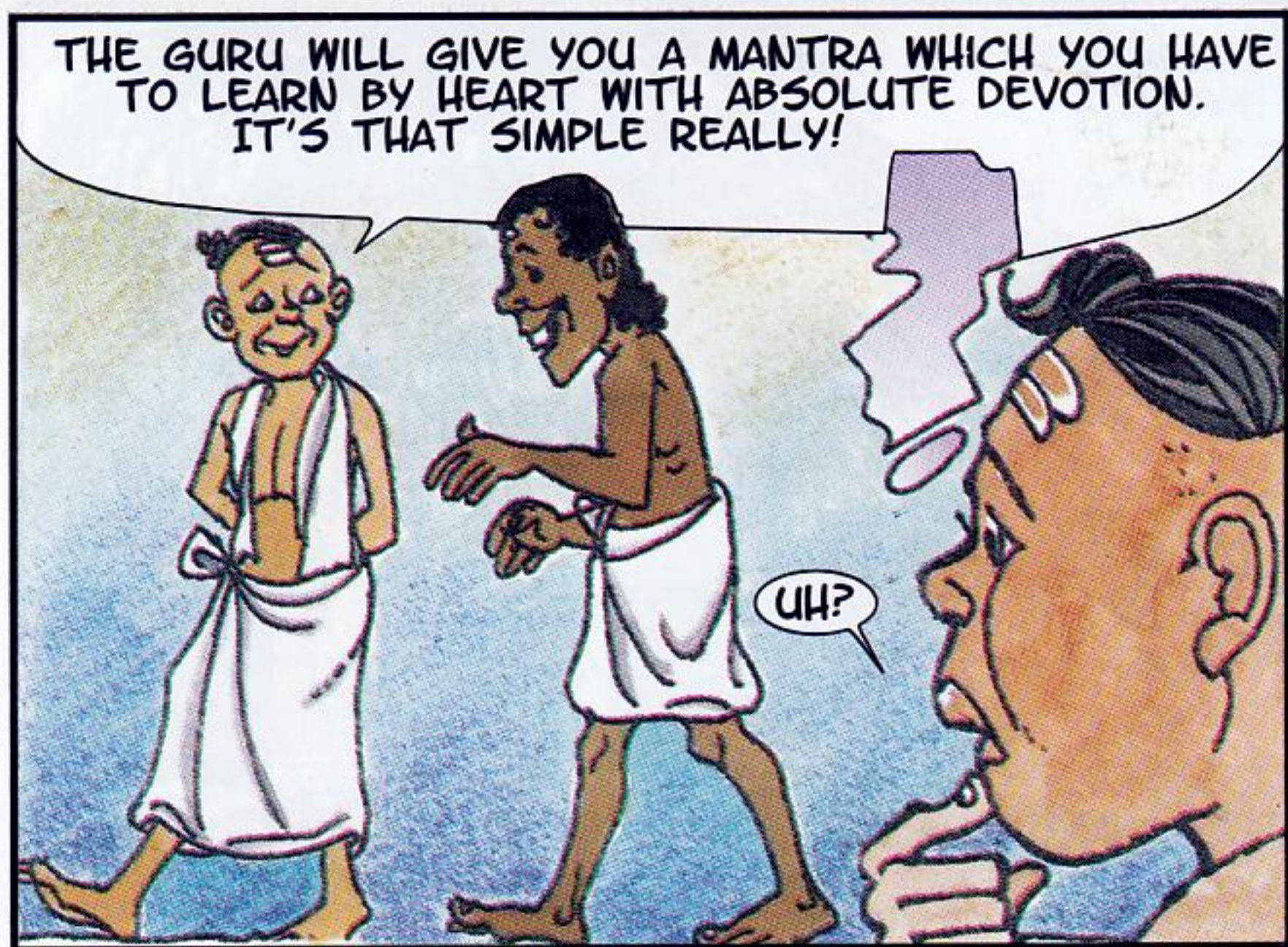
I WISH I COULD LEARN TO TREAT POISONS AND GET RICH LIKE THAT VAIDYAN! LET ME ASK HIS DISCIPLE.

CHETTAN,<sup>1</sup> I ALSO WANT TO LEARN HOW TO TREAT A POISON BITE...

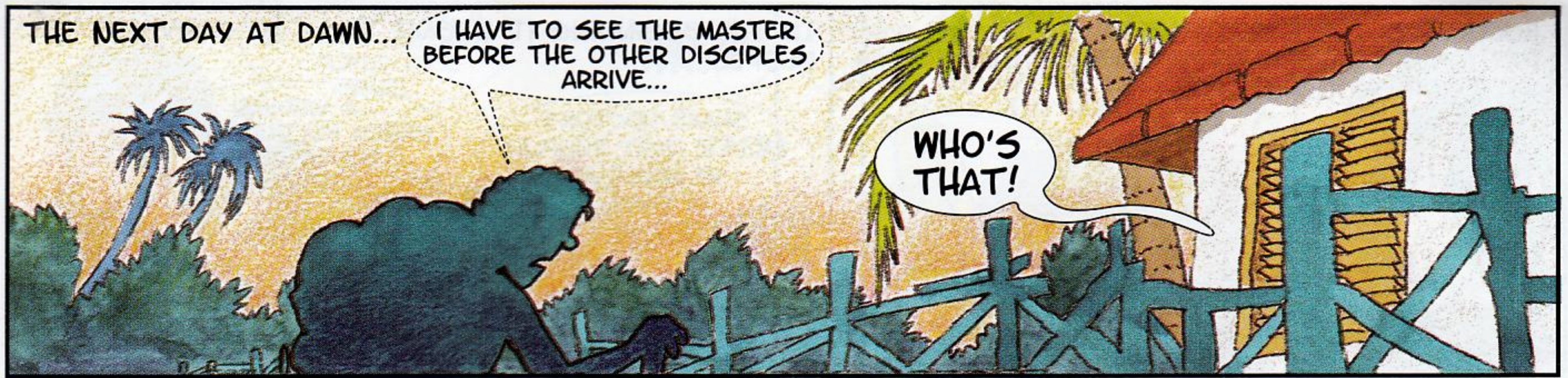
GO TO THE GURU HIMSELF AND EXPRESS YOUR DESIRE. BUT FIRST YOU MUST MAKE HIM AN OFFERING!











THE NEXT DAY AT DAWN...

I HAVE TO SEE THE MASTER  
BEFORE THE OTHER DISCIPLES  
ARRIVE...

WHO'S  
THAT!



WHY ARE YOU HERE?

NAMASKARAM  
SAAR, I'VE  
BROUGHT THESE  
OFFERINGS FOR  
YOU...

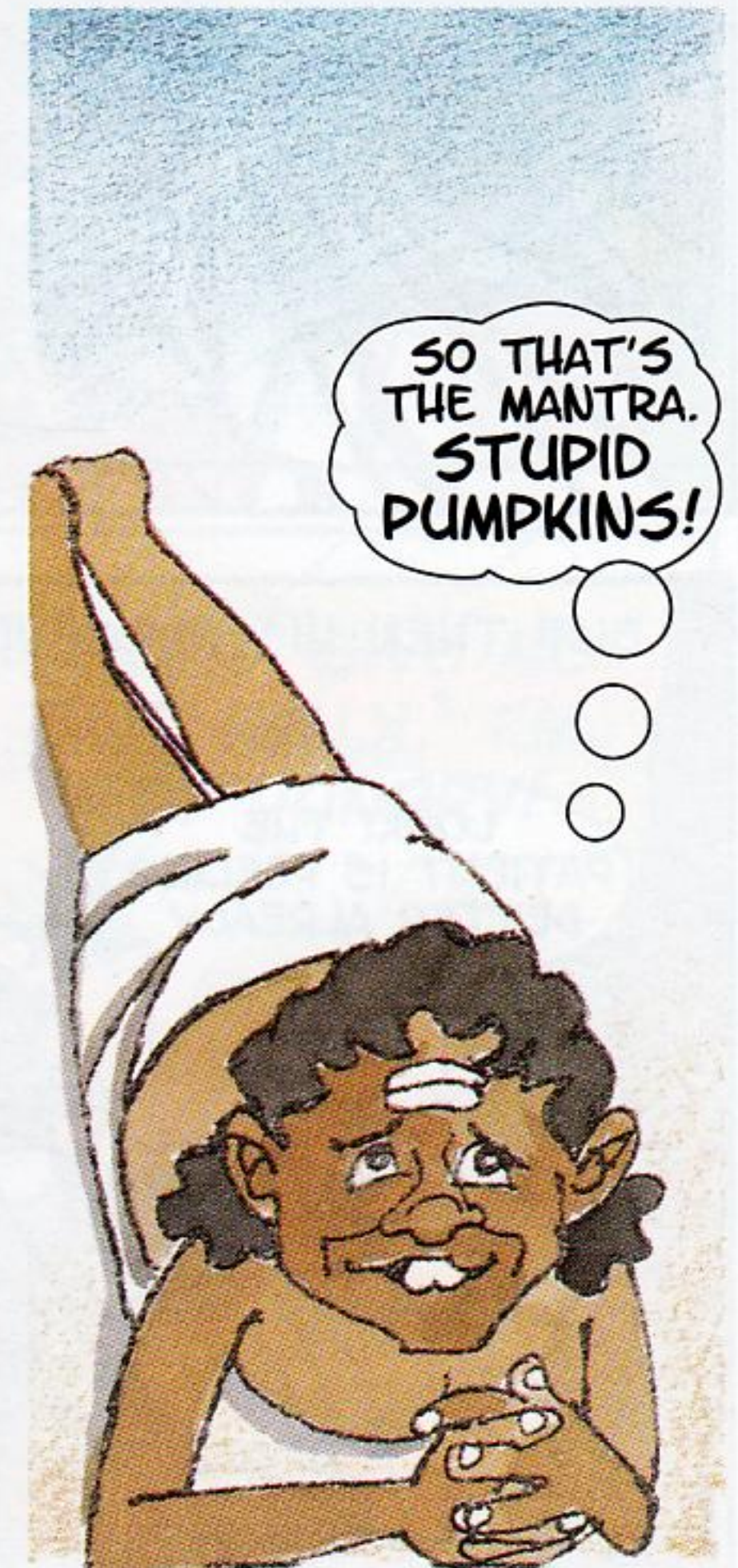


PUMPKINS!

NOW PLEASE  
TEACH ME HOW TO  
TREAT POISONS.



STUPID  
PUMPKINS!

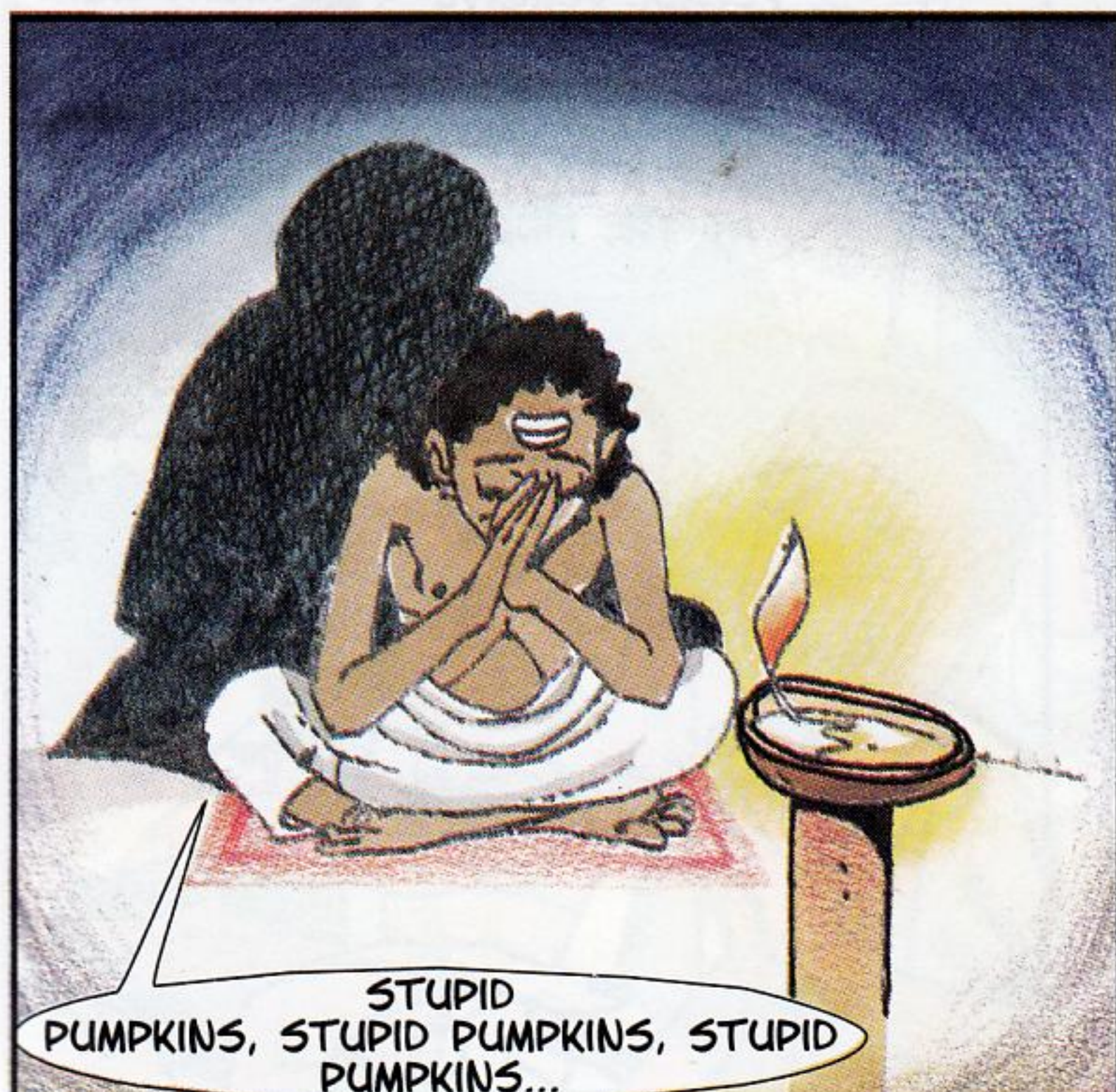


SO THAT'S  
THE MANTRA.  
STUPID  
PUMPKINS!

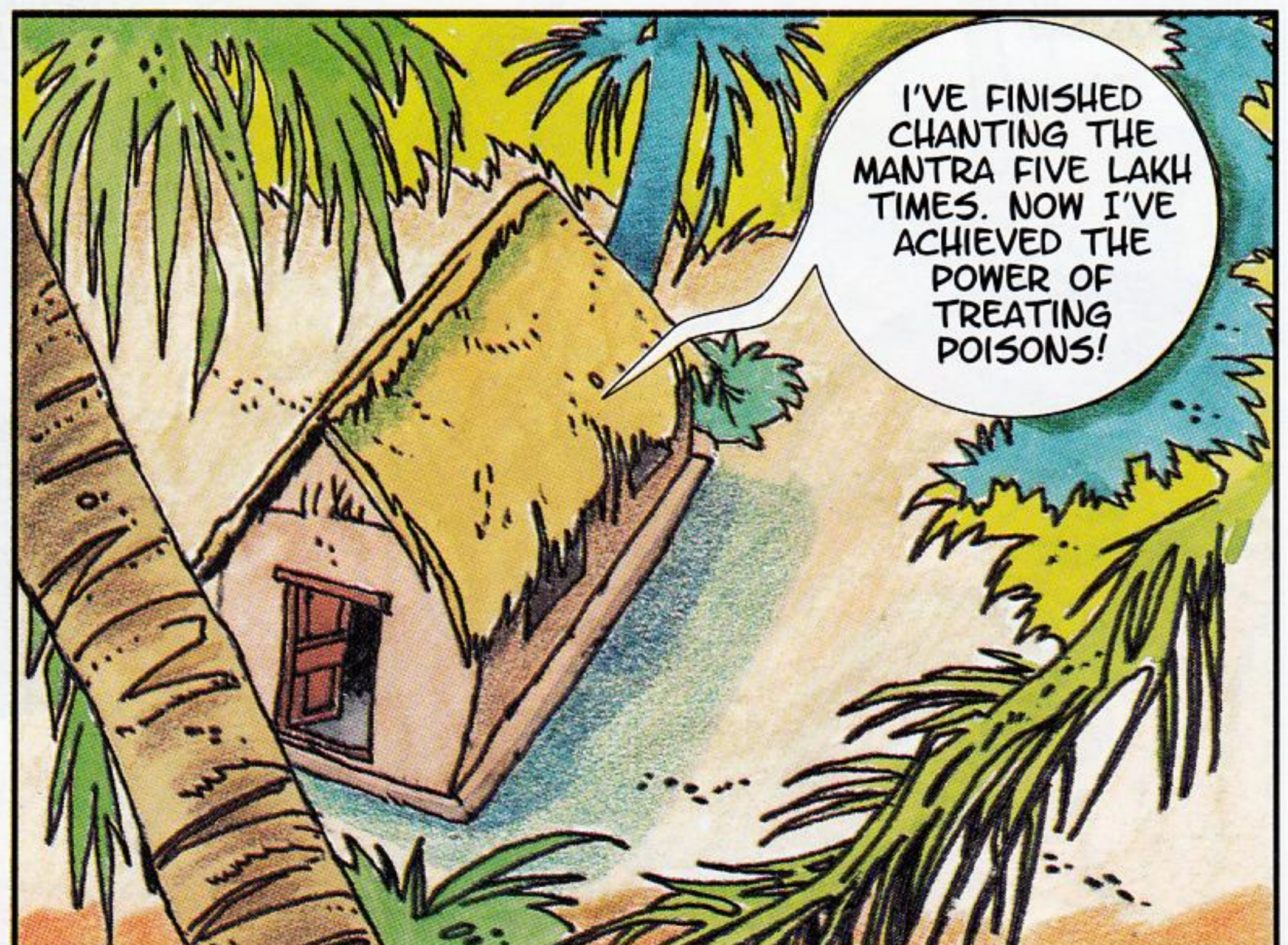


I'VE GOT  
THE MANTRA!

I'VE GOT  
THE MANTRA!



STUPID  
PUMPKINS, STUPID PUMPKINS, STUPID  
PUMPKINS...



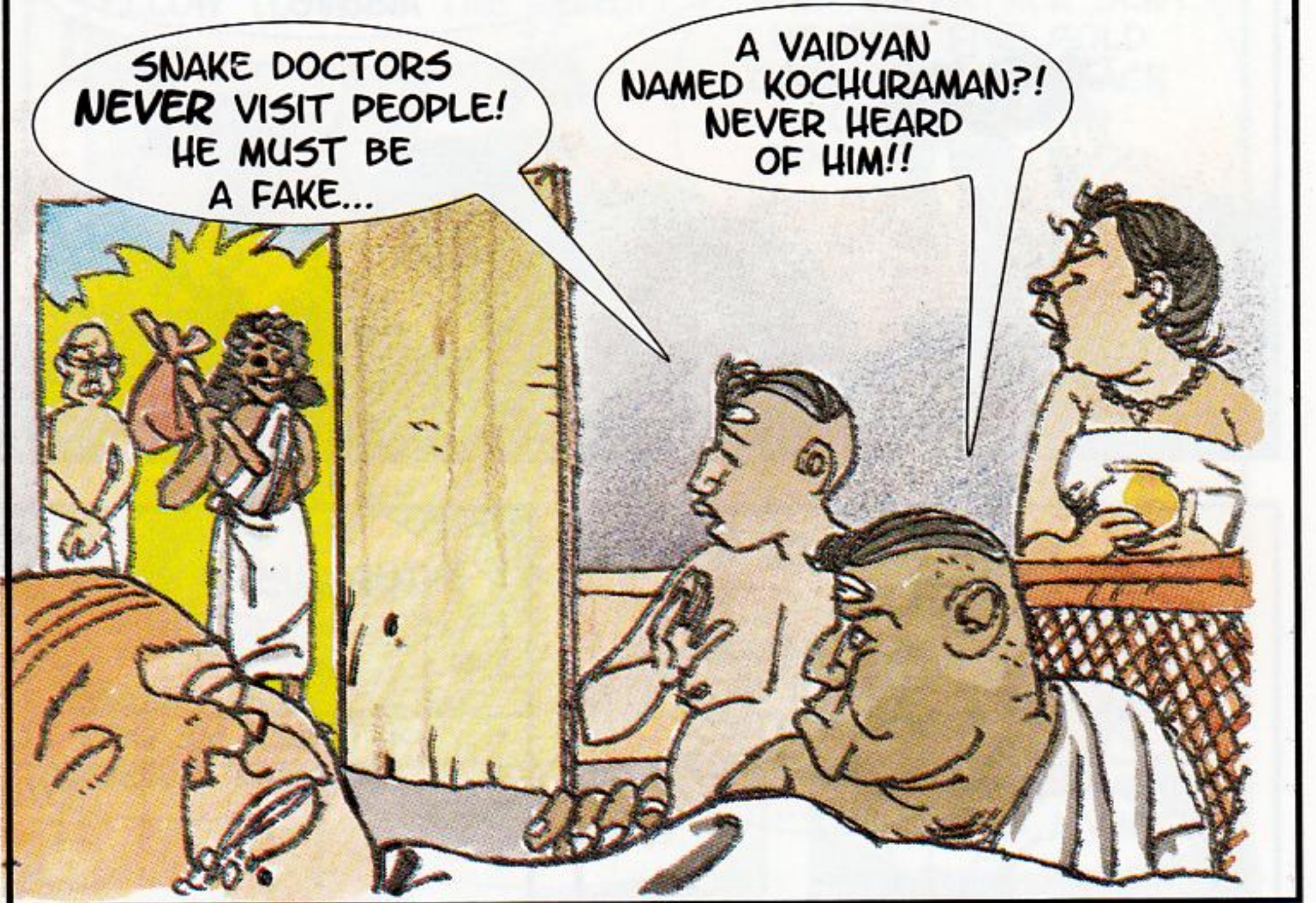
I'VE FINISHED  
CHANTING THE  
MANTRA FIVE LAKH  
TIMES. NOW I'VE  
ACHIEVED THE  
POWER OF  
TREATING  
POISONS!



KOCHURAMAN SET OUT IN SEARCH OF PATIENTS TRAVELLING TO PLACES INFESTED WITH POISONOUS SNAKES.



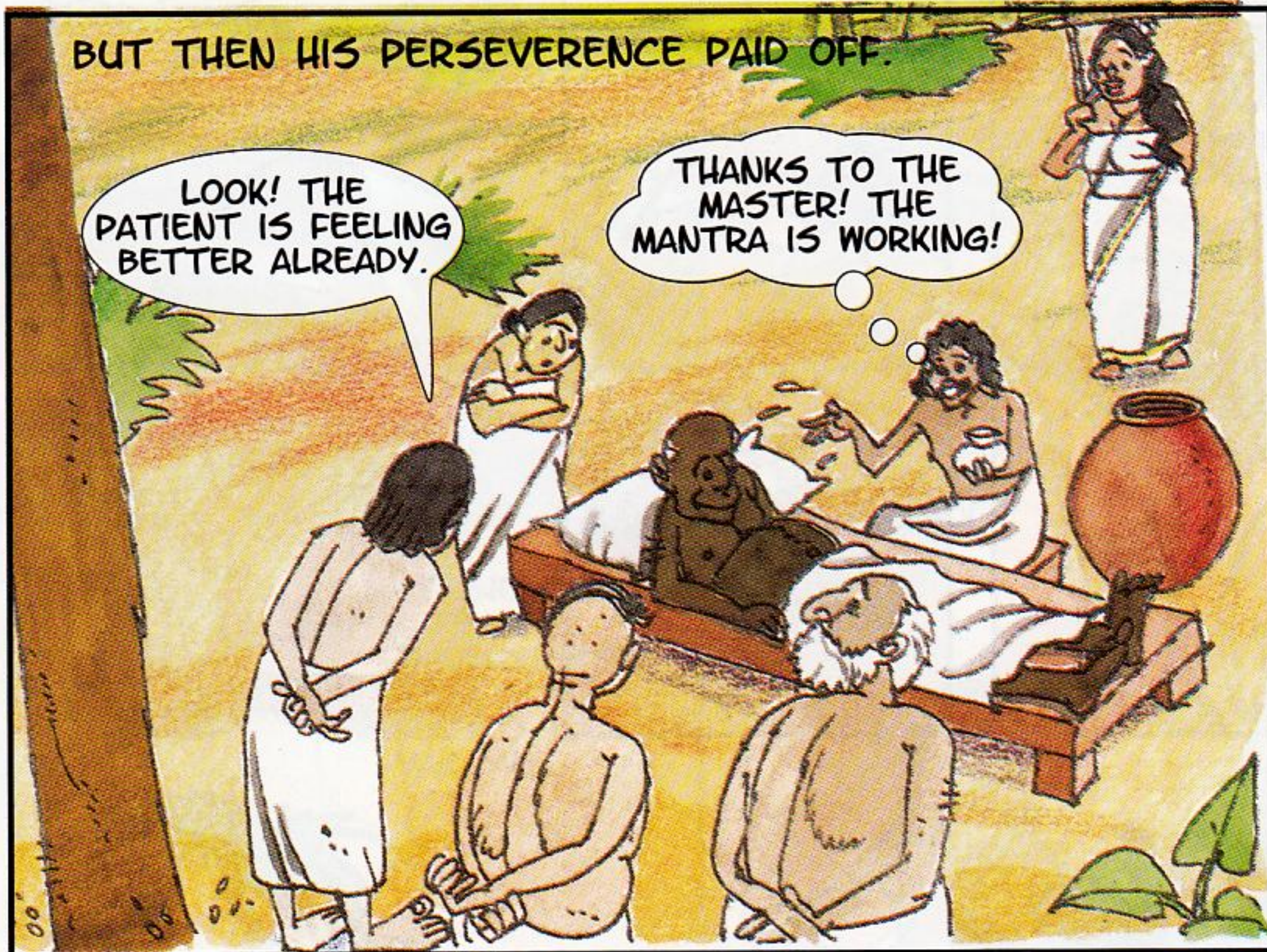
IN THE BEGINNING IT WASN'T EASY TO CONVINCE PEOPLE...



SNAKE DOCTORS NEVER VISIT PEOPLE! HE MUST BE A FAKE...

A VAIDYAN NAMED KOCHURAMAN?! NEVER HEARD OF HIM!!

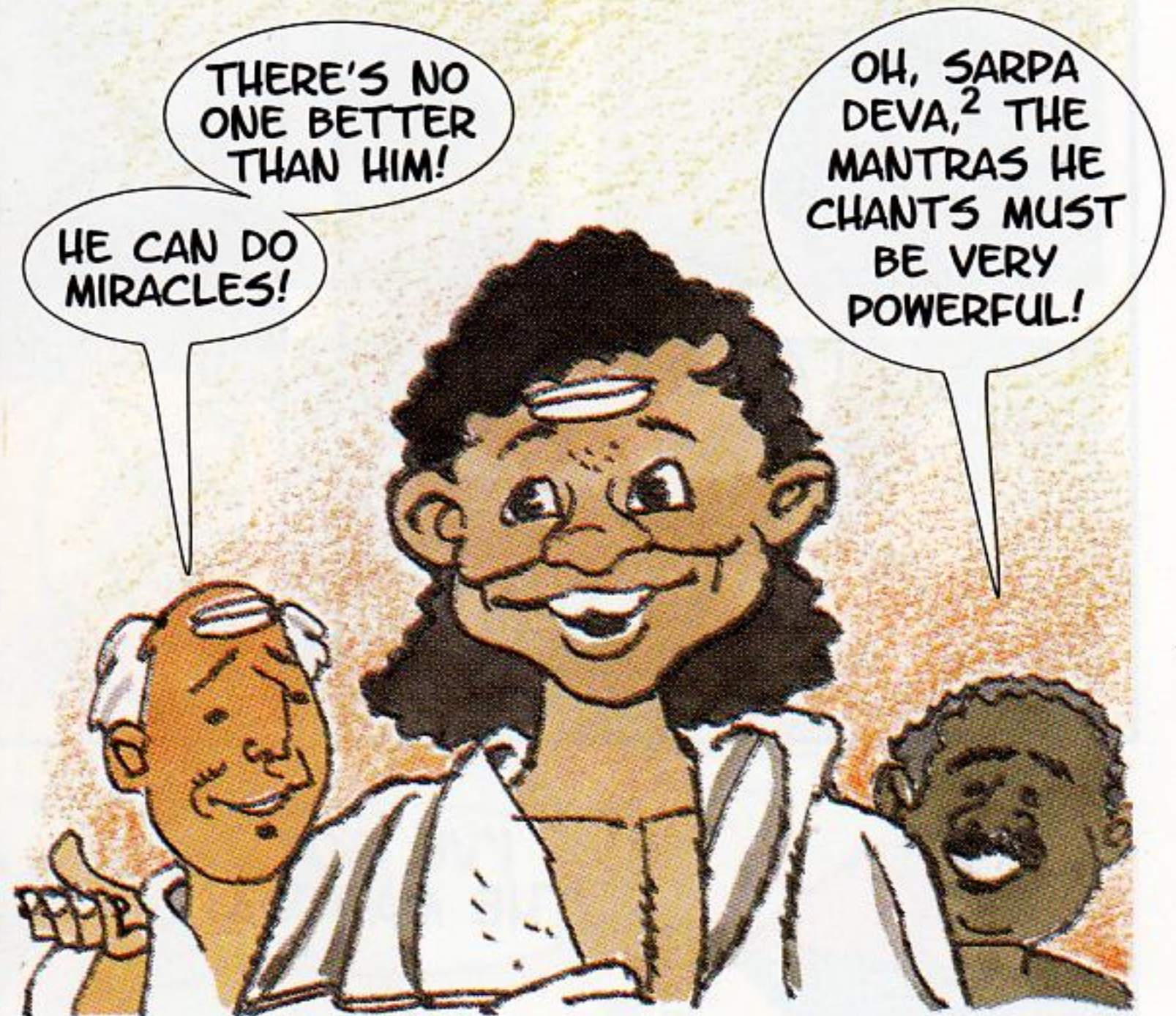
BUT THEN HIS PERSEVERENCE PAID OFF.



LOOK! THE PATIENT IS FEELING BETTER ALREADY.

THANKS TO THE MASTER! THE MANTRA IS WORKING!

KOCHURAMAN SOON BECAME A SUCCESSFUL VAIDYAN!

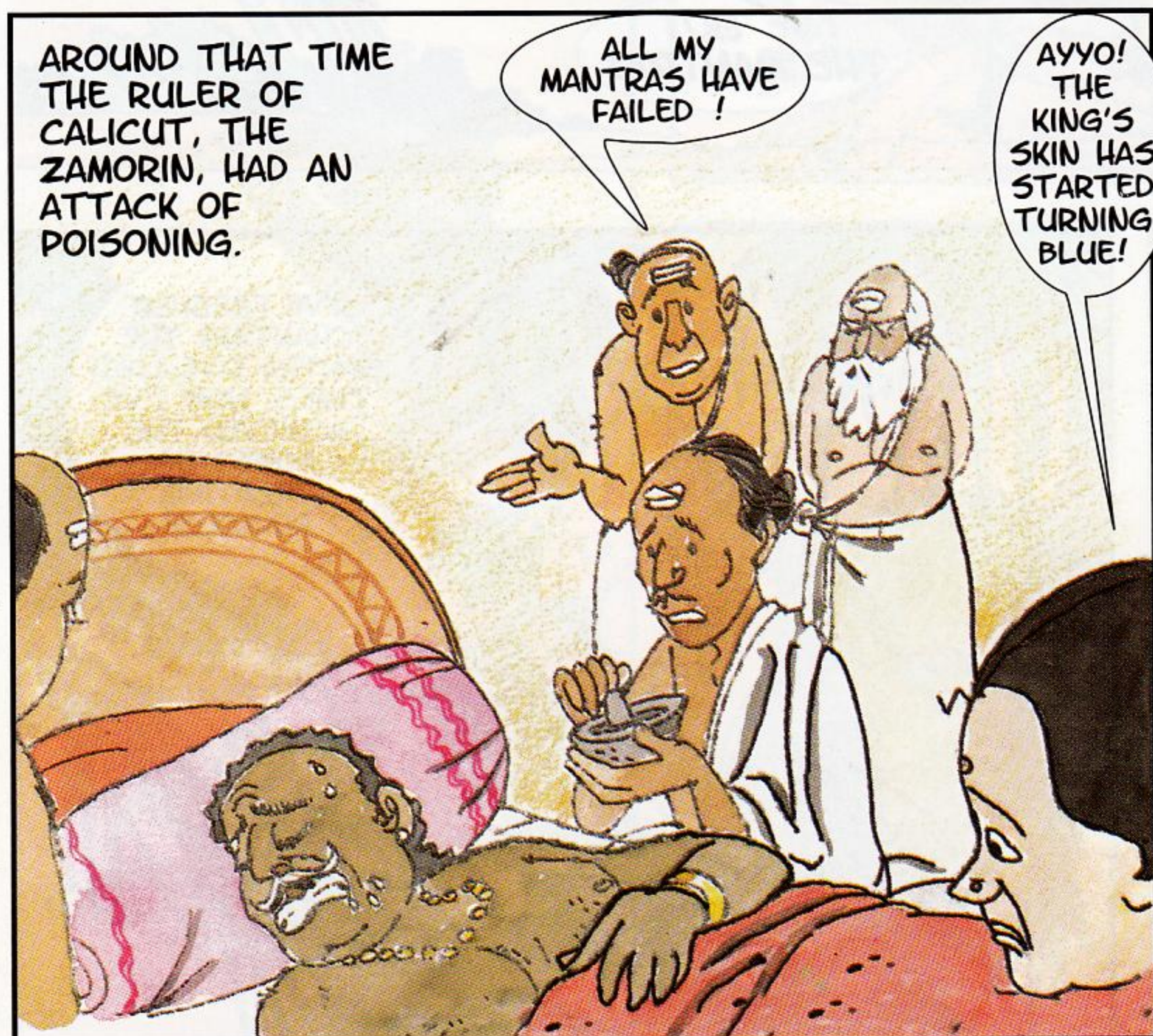


THERE'S NO ONE BETTER THAN HIM!

HE CAN DO MIRACLES!

OH, SARPA DEVA,<sup>2</sup> THE MANTRAS HE CHANTS MUST BE VERY POWERFUL!

AROUND THAT TIME THE RULER OF CALICUT, THE ZAMORIN, HAD AN ATTACK OF POISONING.



ALL MY MANTRAS HAVE FAILED!

AYYO! THE KING'S SKIN HAS STARTED TURNING BLUE!

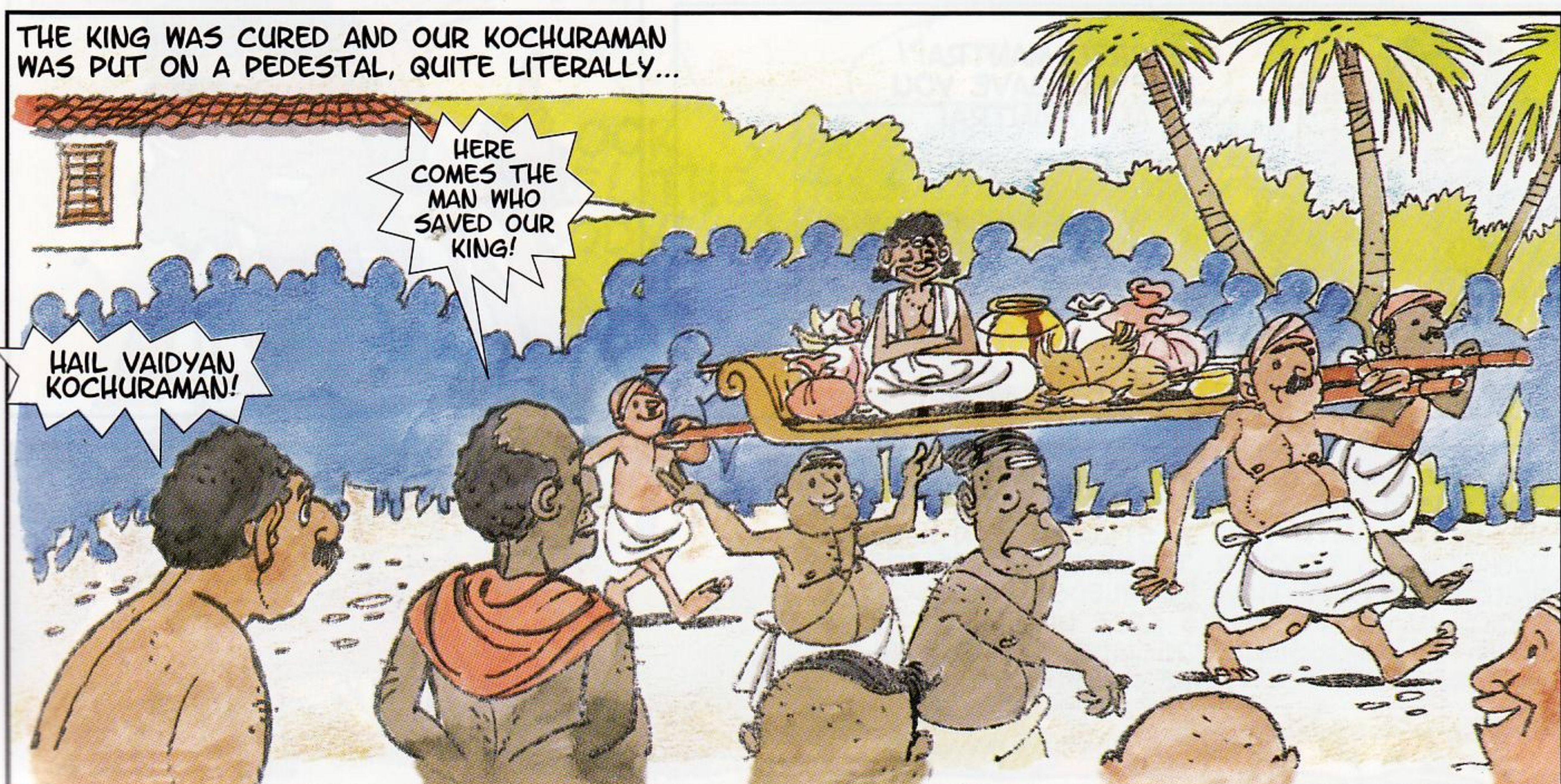
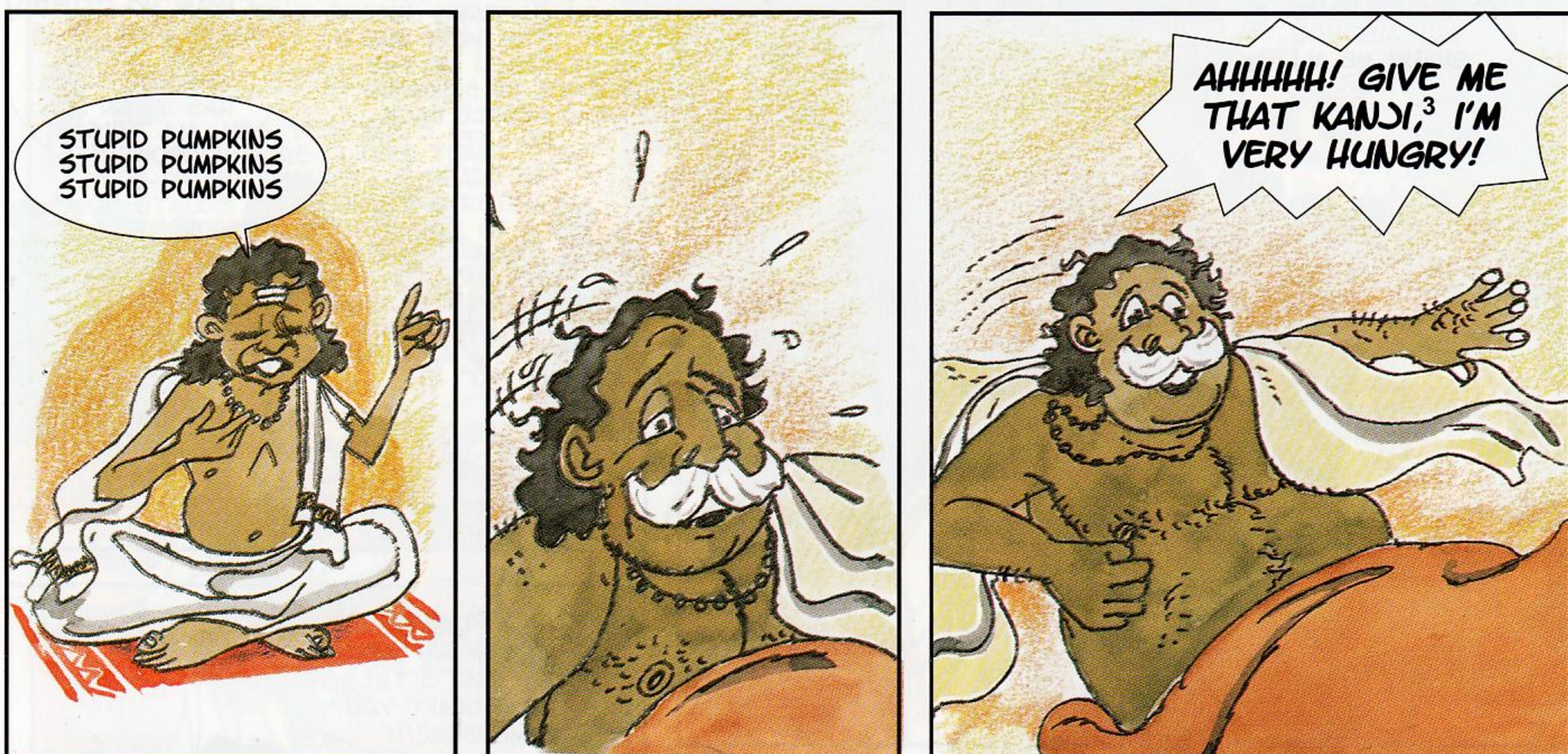
MAHARANI, THERE IS NO HOPE NOW!



PLEASE FORGIVE ME FOR SPEAKING, BUT SHOULD WE ASK KOCHURAMAN VAIDYAN TO HAVE A LAST LOOK AT THE KING?

YES, SEND FOR HIM RIGHT NOW!







STANDING AMONGST ALL THE FAILED POISON DOCTORS WAS KOCHURAMAN'S OWN TEACHER...

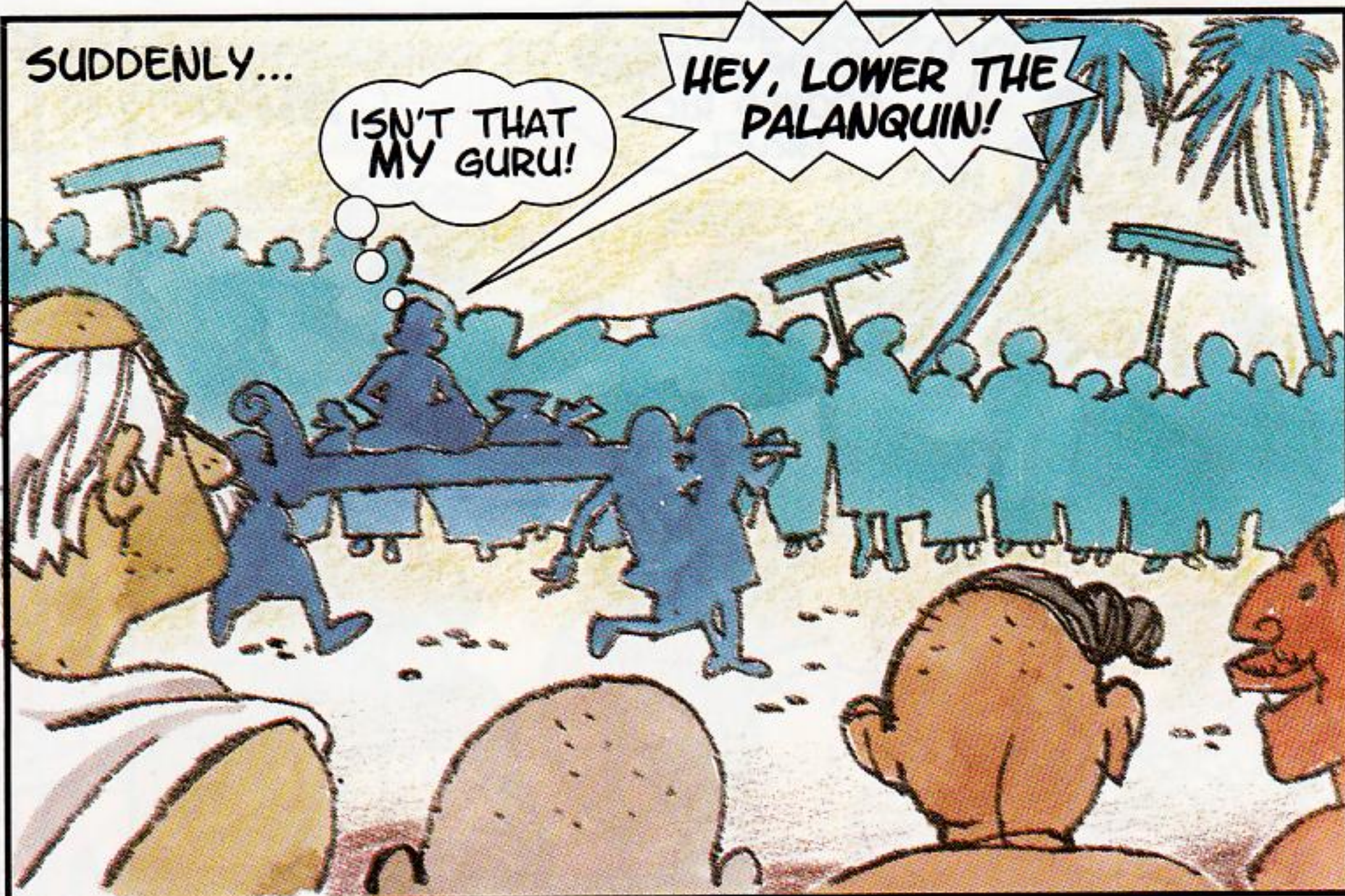
ISN'T THAT KOCHURAMAN, THAT CHEEKY LAD WITH THE PUMPKINS? HE MUST HAVE LEARNT HIS ART FROM A BETTER GURU. I WAS A FOOL TO LET HIM GO!



SUDDENLY...

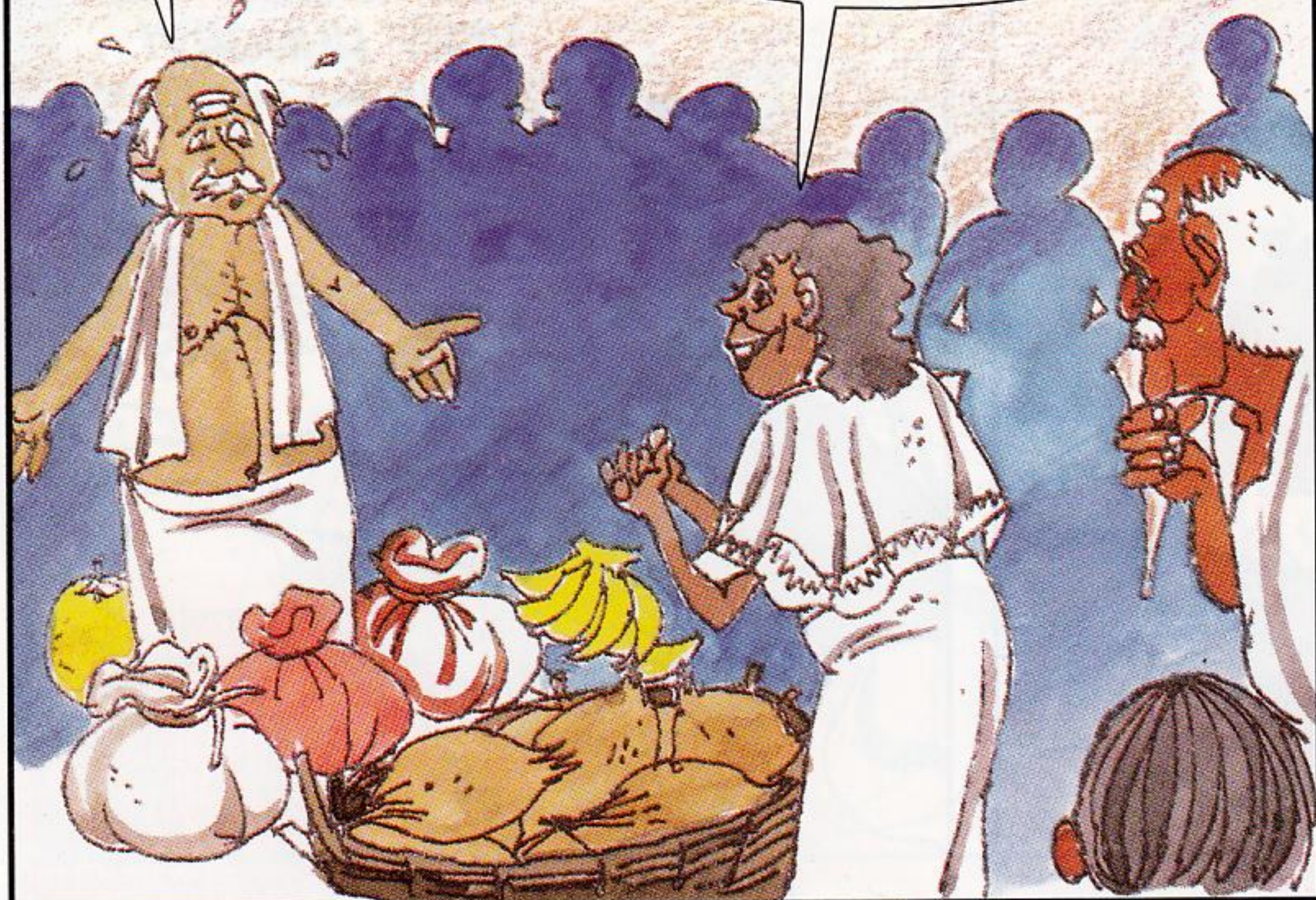
ISN'T THAT MY GURU!

HEY, LOWER THE PALANQUIN!



KOCHURAMAN, WHY ARE YOU GIVING ME ALL THIS?

I OWE ALL THIS TO YOUR TEACHINGS AND BLESSINGS. PLEASE ACCEPT THIS AS A TOKEN OF MY HUMBLE THANKS.



ME?

I HAVEN'T TAUGHT YOU ANYTHING. IN FACT, IT IS YOU WHO MUST TEACH ME THE SCIENCE OF BRINGING DEAD PEOPLE BACK TO LIFE!

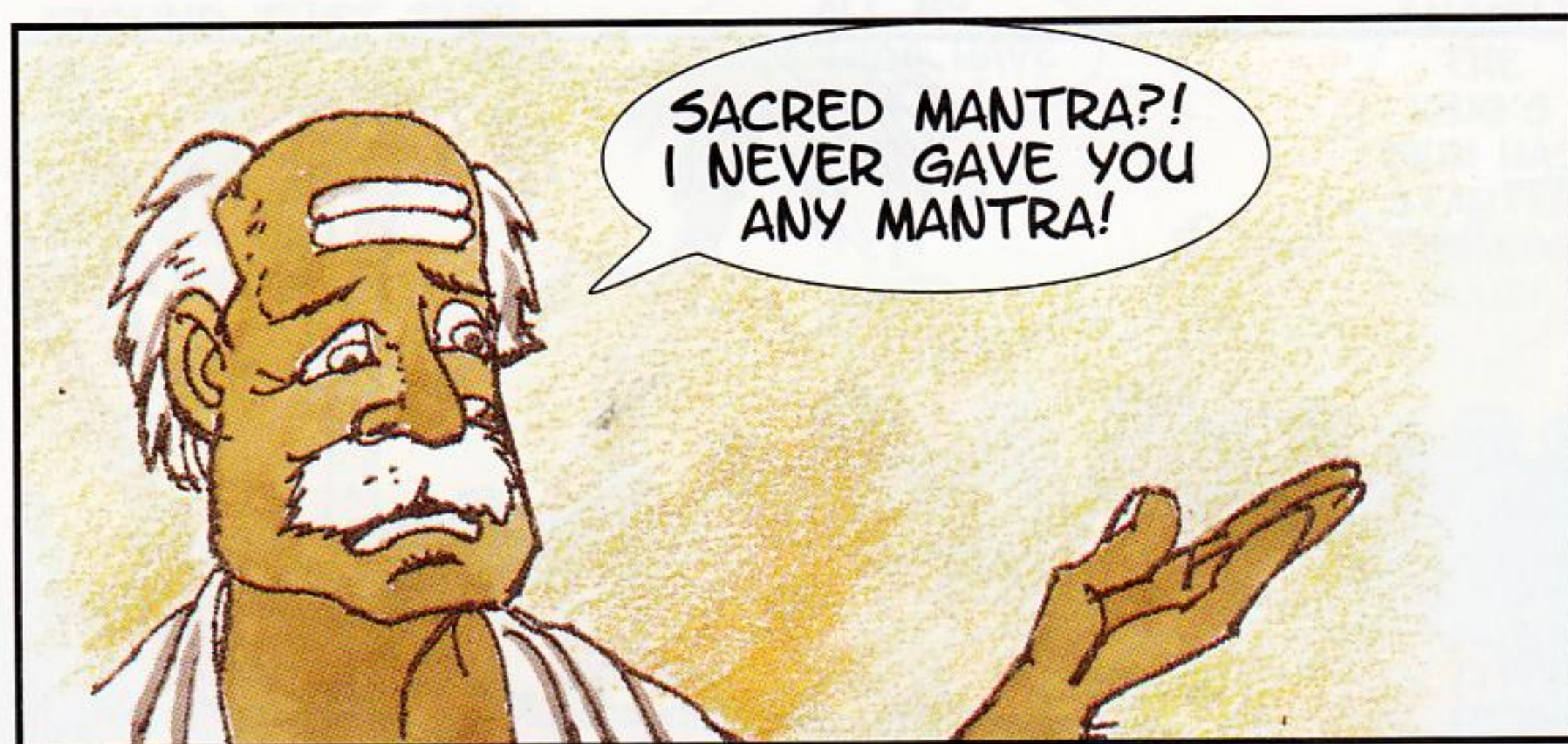
BUT ASAN<sup>4</sup>, I HAVE NO OTHER KNOWLEDGE. IT IS YOUR SACRED MANTRA THAT HAS GIVEN ME ALL THIS POWER!



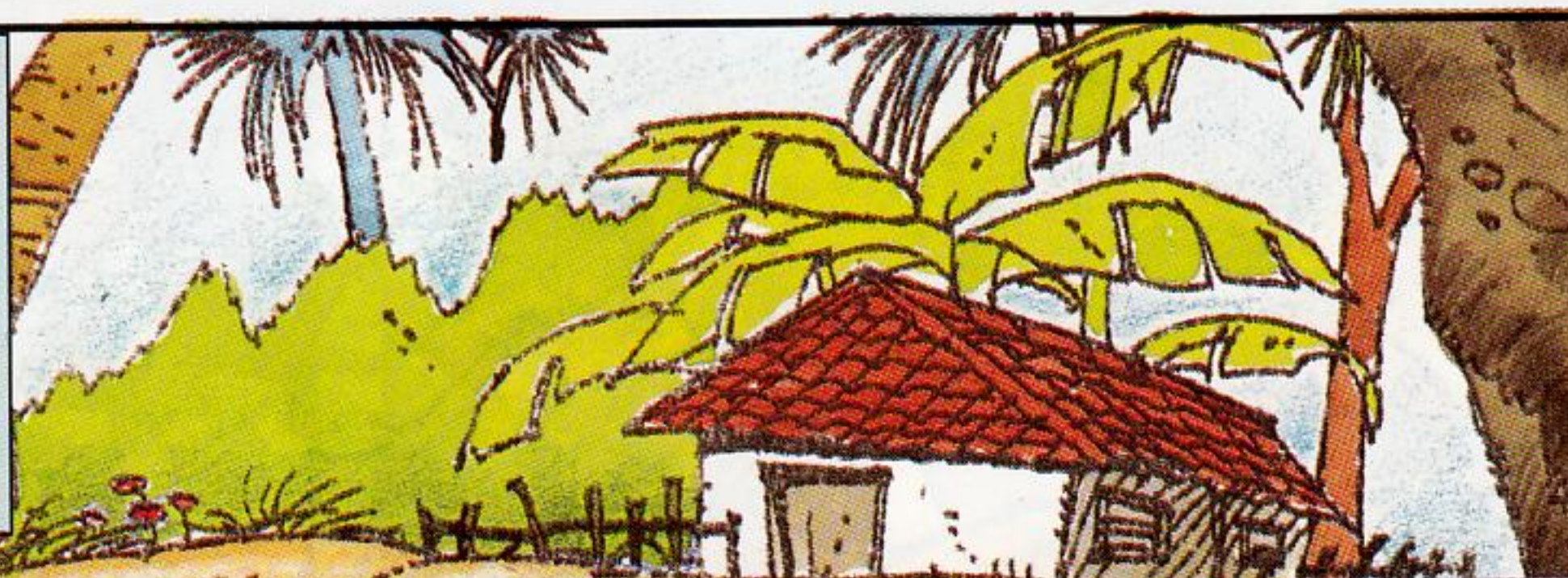
STUPID PUMPKINS! THAT'S WHAT YOU SAID! THAT'S THE MANTRA! DON'T YOU REMEMBER?!!!



SACRED MANTRA?! I NEVER GAVE YOU ANY MANTRA!

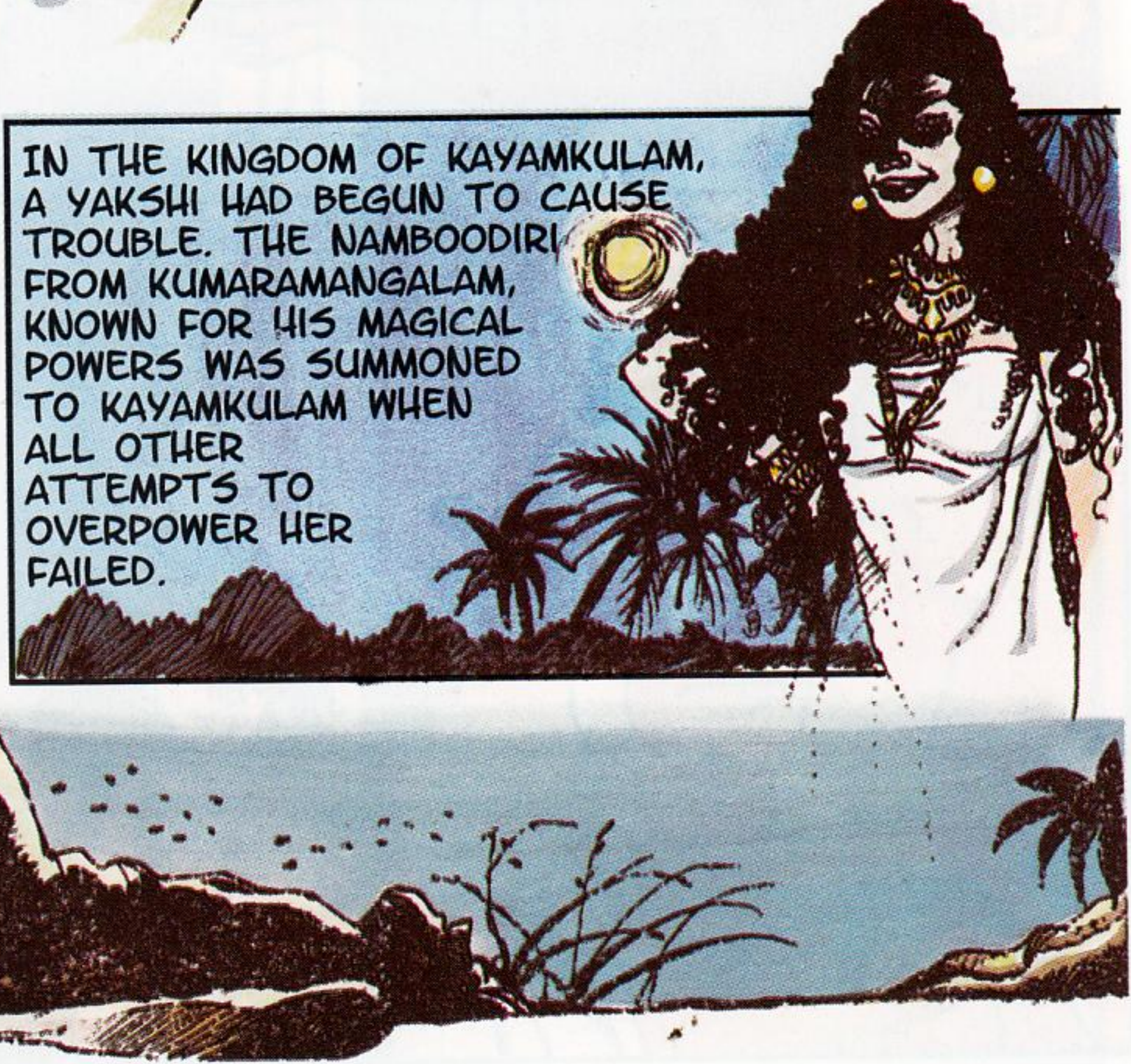
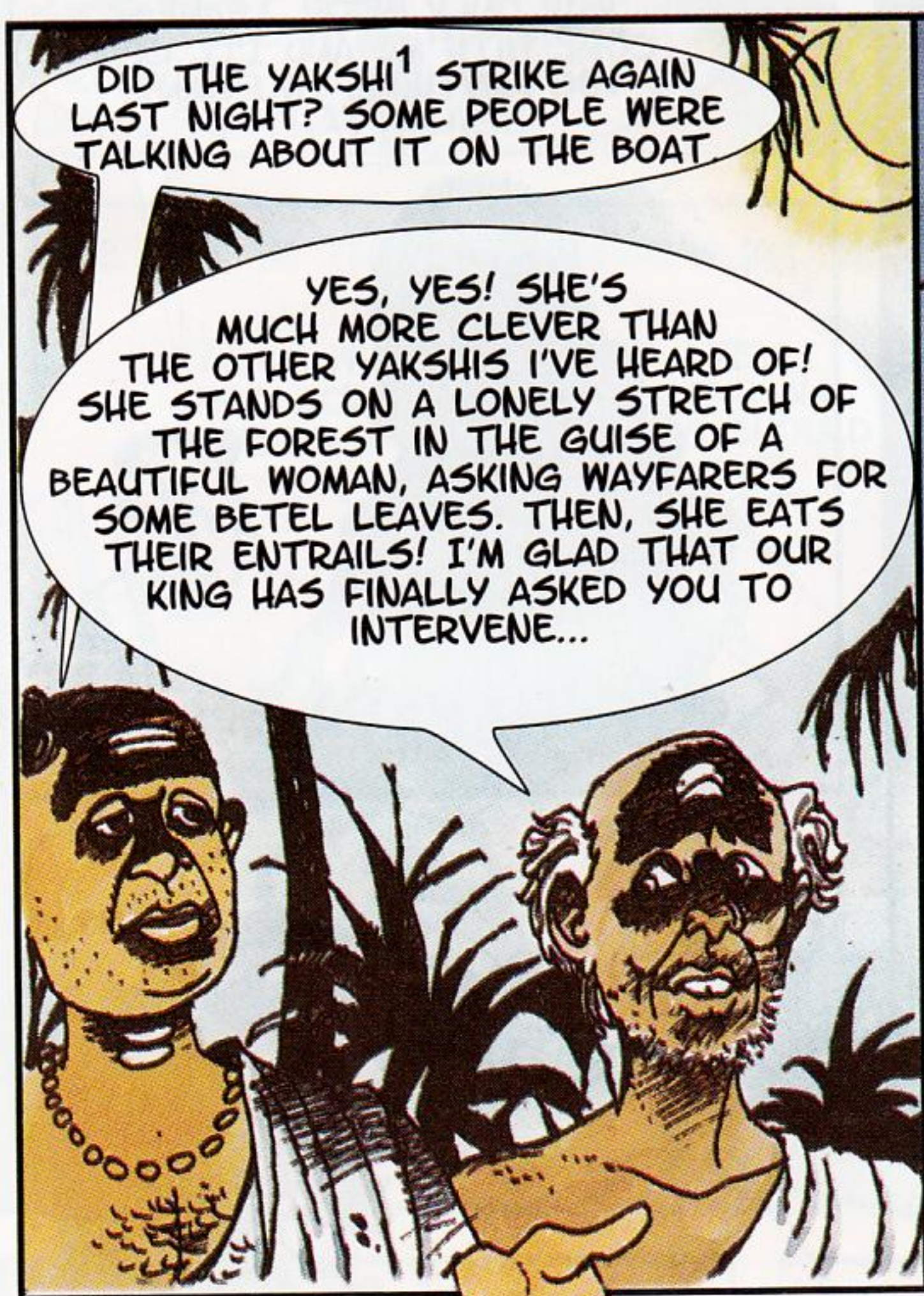


THE GURU WAS STUNNED. HE REALISED THAT THIS WAS A LIVING EXAMPLE OF THE DEVOTION AND UTTER FAITH THAT A STUDENT CAN HAVE TOWARDS HIS TEACHER. THESE QUALITIES ARE MORE IMPORTANT THAN KNOWLEDGE FROM BOOKS. IN KOCHURAMAN'S CASE HIS FAITH MADE THE IMPOSSIBLE POSSIBLE! THE GREAT VAIDYAN NEVER FELT MORE HUMBLER!

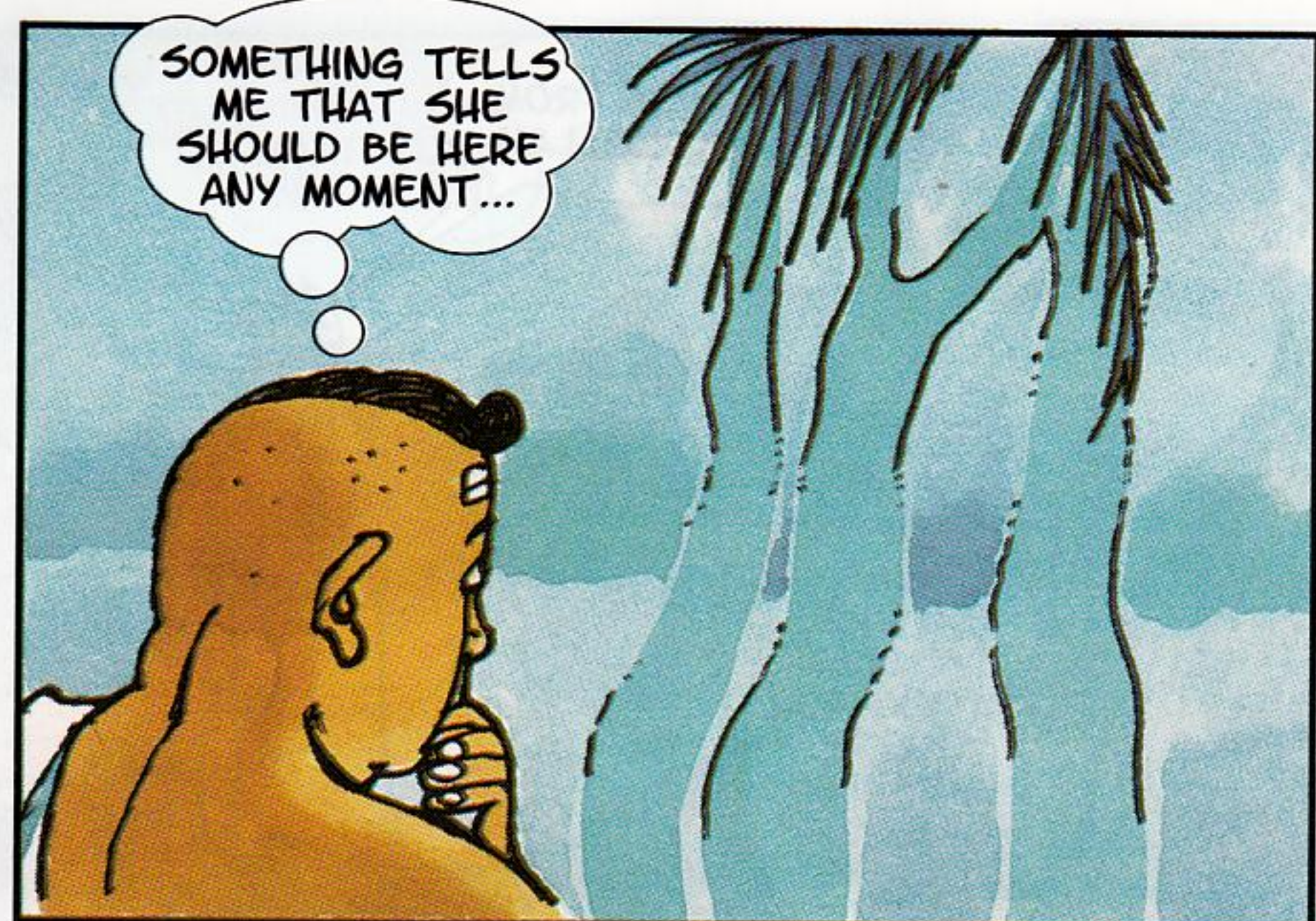


THE END









ALL OF A SUDDEN...



THE NAMBOODIRI'S POWERFUL HYPNOTIC SPELL COMPELLED THE YAKSHI TO FOLLOW HIM, BOUND AS SHE WAS TO HIM. SHE WAS STILL IN HER HUMAN FORM.

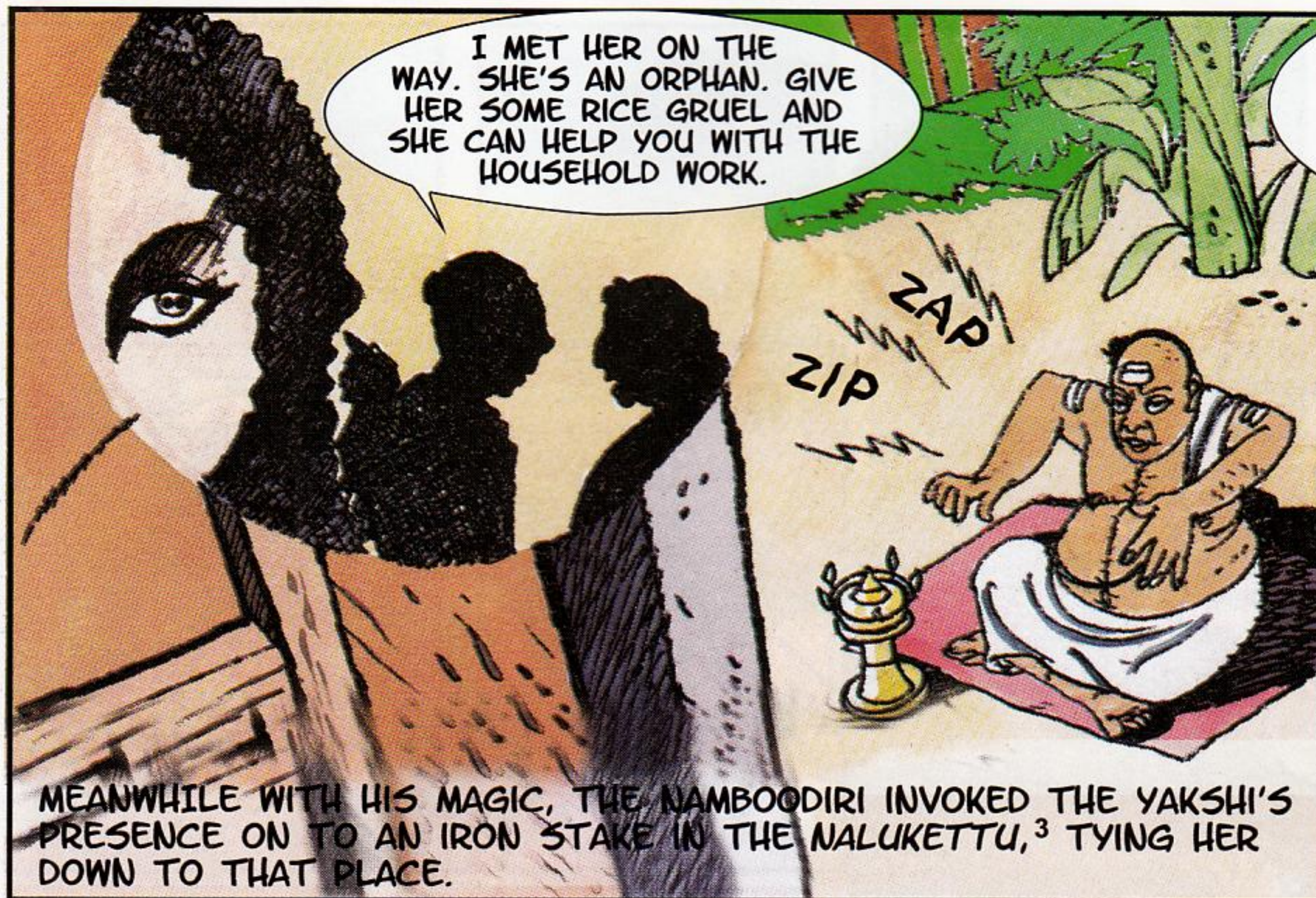


AT THE NAMBOODIRI'S ILLAM THE ANTARJANAMS<sup>2</sup> WERE IN FOR A SURPRISE...



2. Women of a Namboodiri illam, usually in purdah





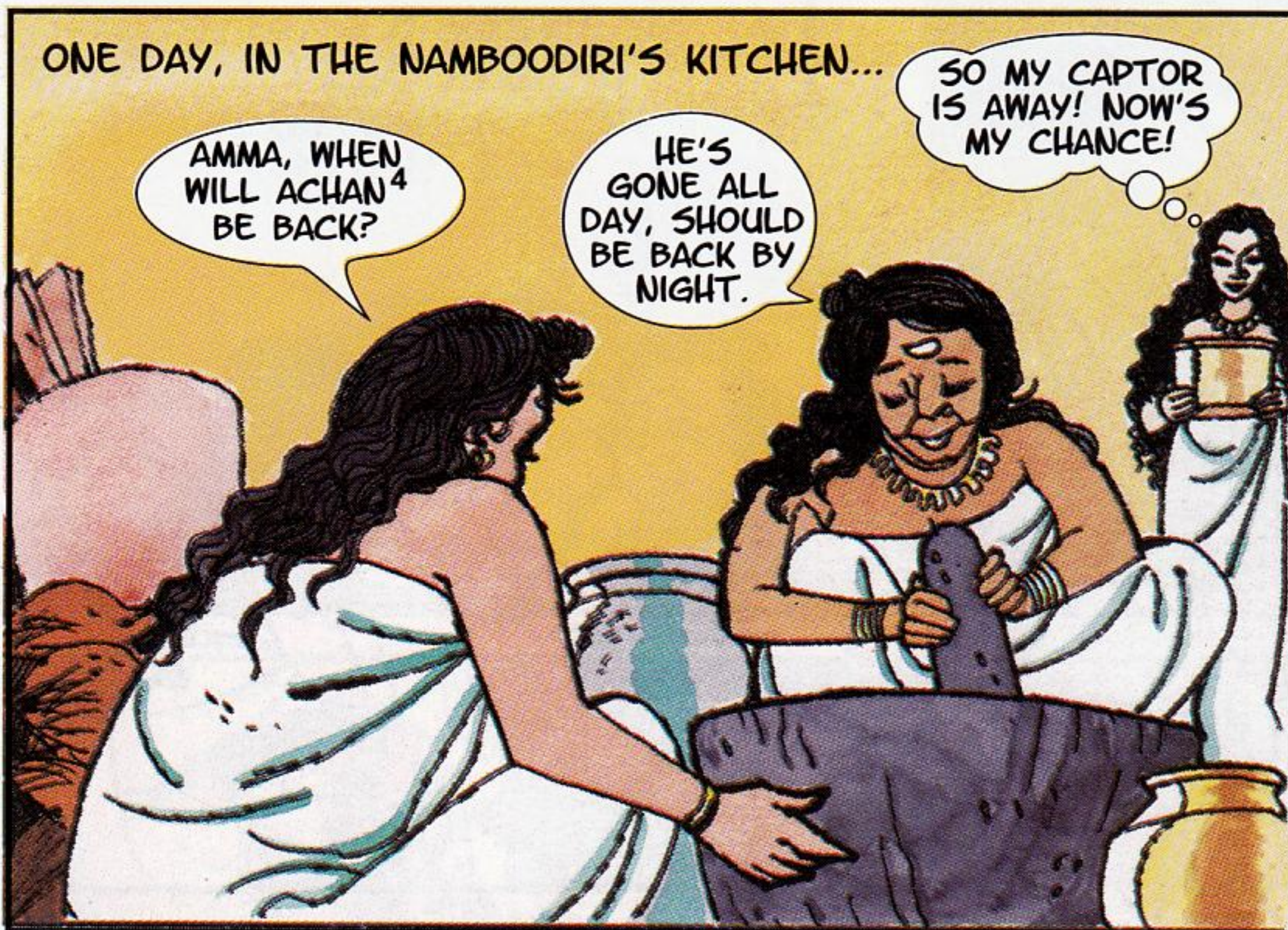
I MET HER ON THE WAY. SHE'S AN ORPHAN. GIVE HER SOME RICE GRUEL AND SHE CAN HELP YOU WITH THE HOUSEHOLD WORK.

ZAP  
ZIP

MEANWHILE WITH HIS MAGIC, THE NAMBOODIRI INVOKED THE YAKSHI'S PRESENCE ON TO AN IRON STAKE IN THE NALUKETTU,<sup>3</sup> TYING HER DOWN TO THAT PLACE.

LISTEN GOWRI, REMEMBER TO NEVER EVER LET HER STEP INTO THE NALUKETTU. SHE CAN SLEEP IN THE OUTHOUSE AT NIGHT.

?!

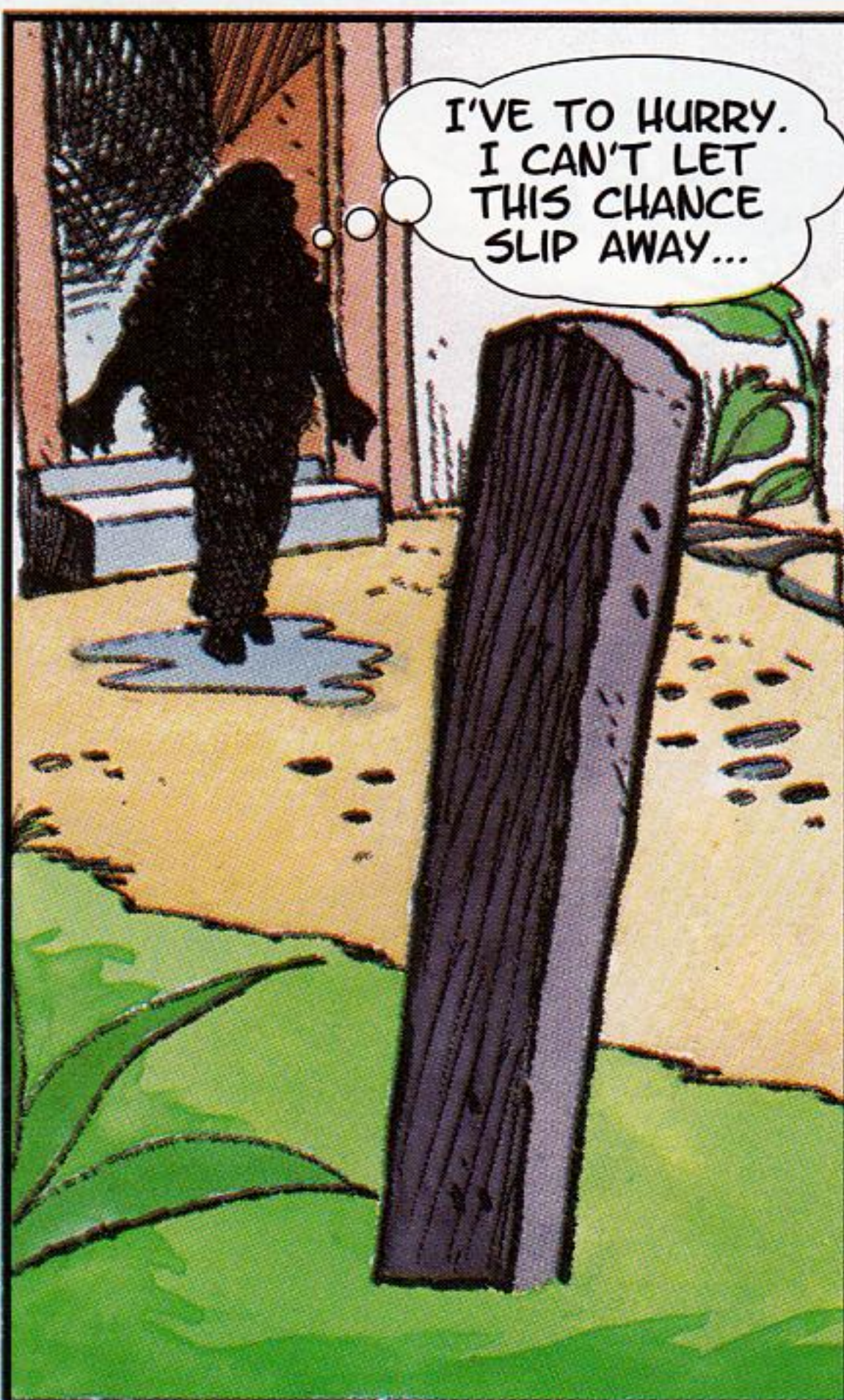


ONE DAY, IN THE NAMBOODIRI'S KITCHEN...

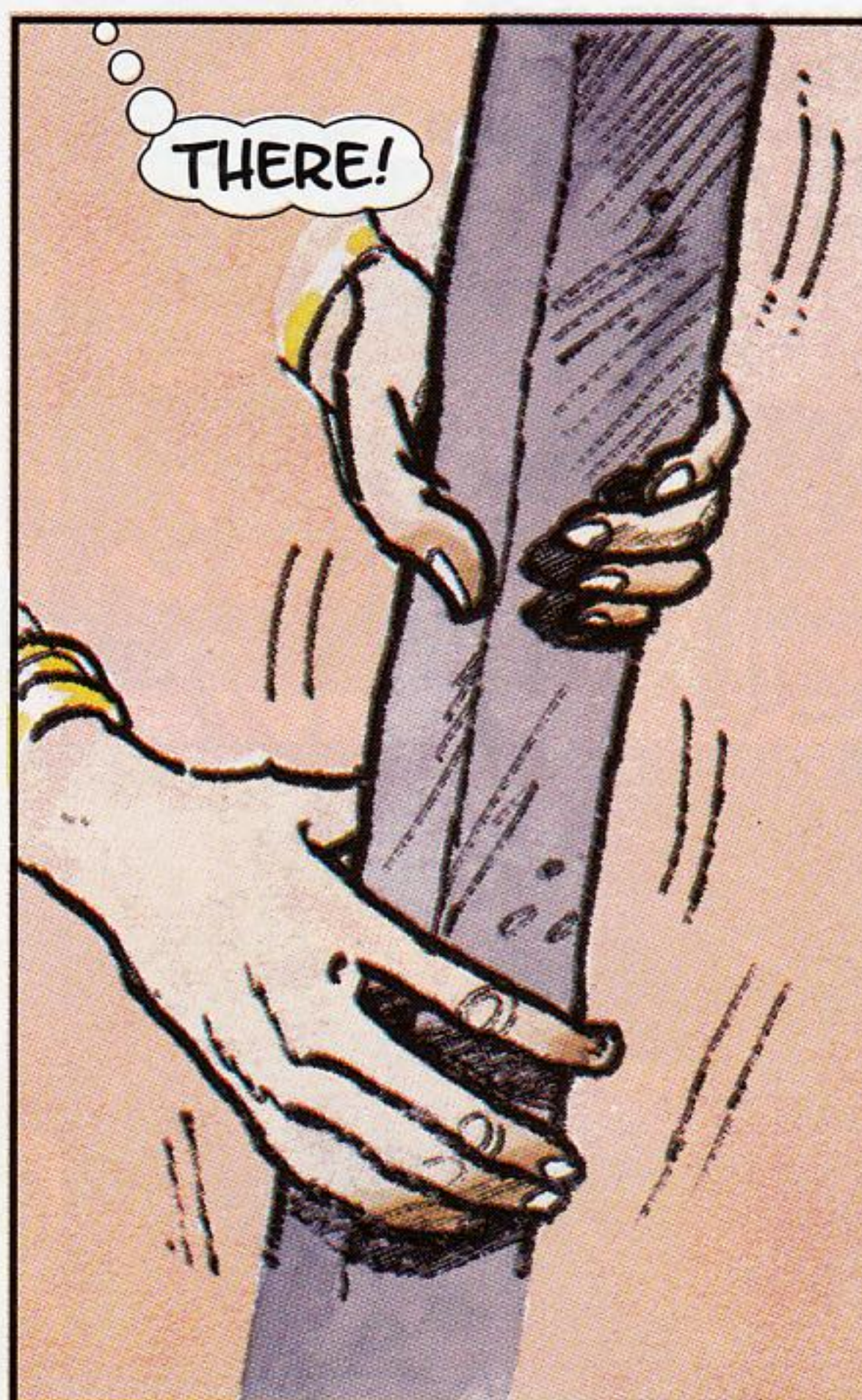
AMMA, WHEN WILL ACHAN<sup>4</sup> BE BACK?

HE'S GONE ALL DAY, SHOULD BE BACK BY NIGHT.

SO MY CAPTOR IS AWAY! NOW'S MY CHANCE!



I'VE TO HURRY. I CAN'T LET THIS CHANCE SLIP AWAY...



THERE!



DONE!

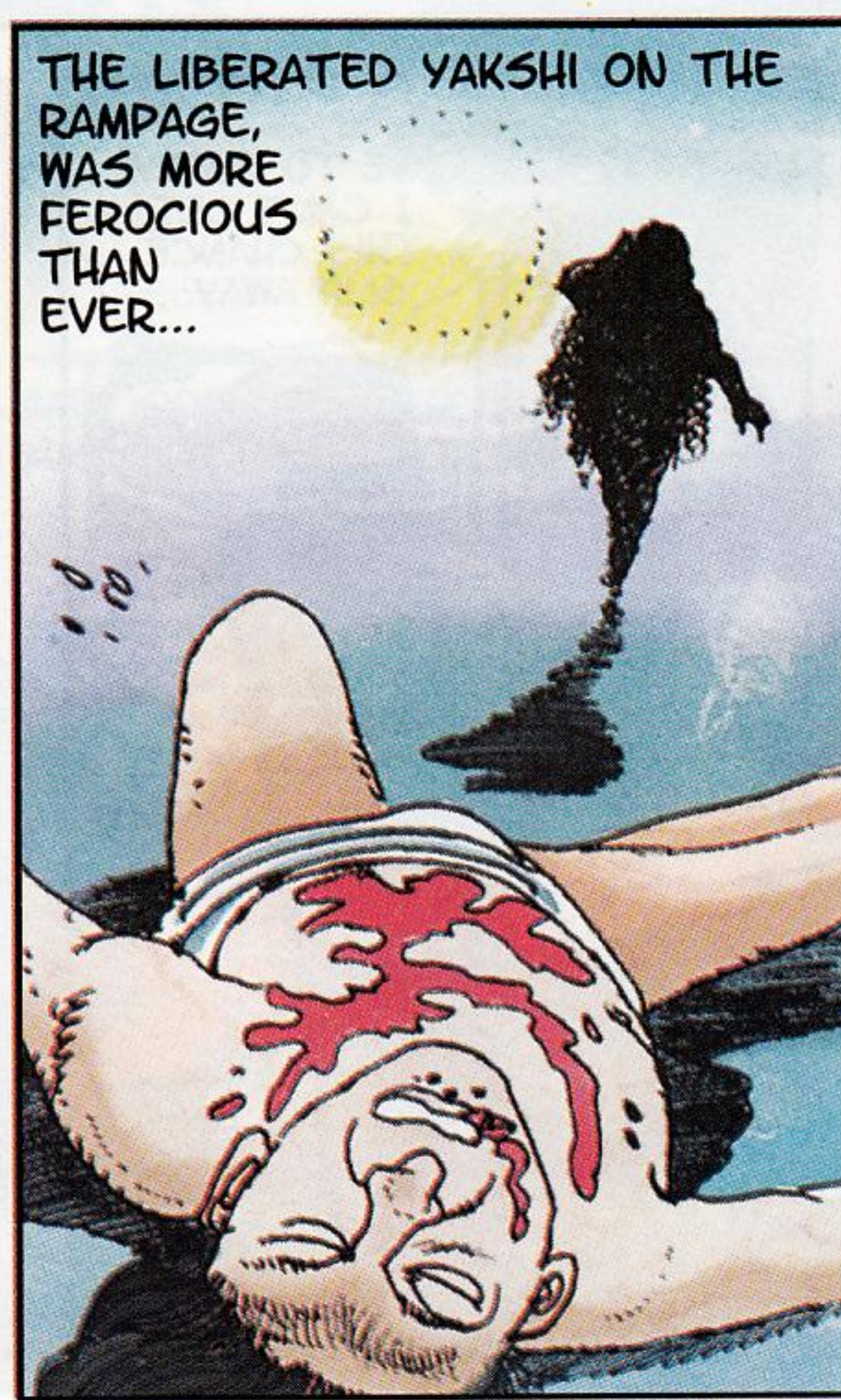




THE YAKSHI WAS FREE...



THE NEXT DAY...







THE KING WAS NOW IN A STATE OF TOTAL PANIC.

SEND FOR THE NAMBOODIRI OF KUMARAMANGALAM! AT ONCE!

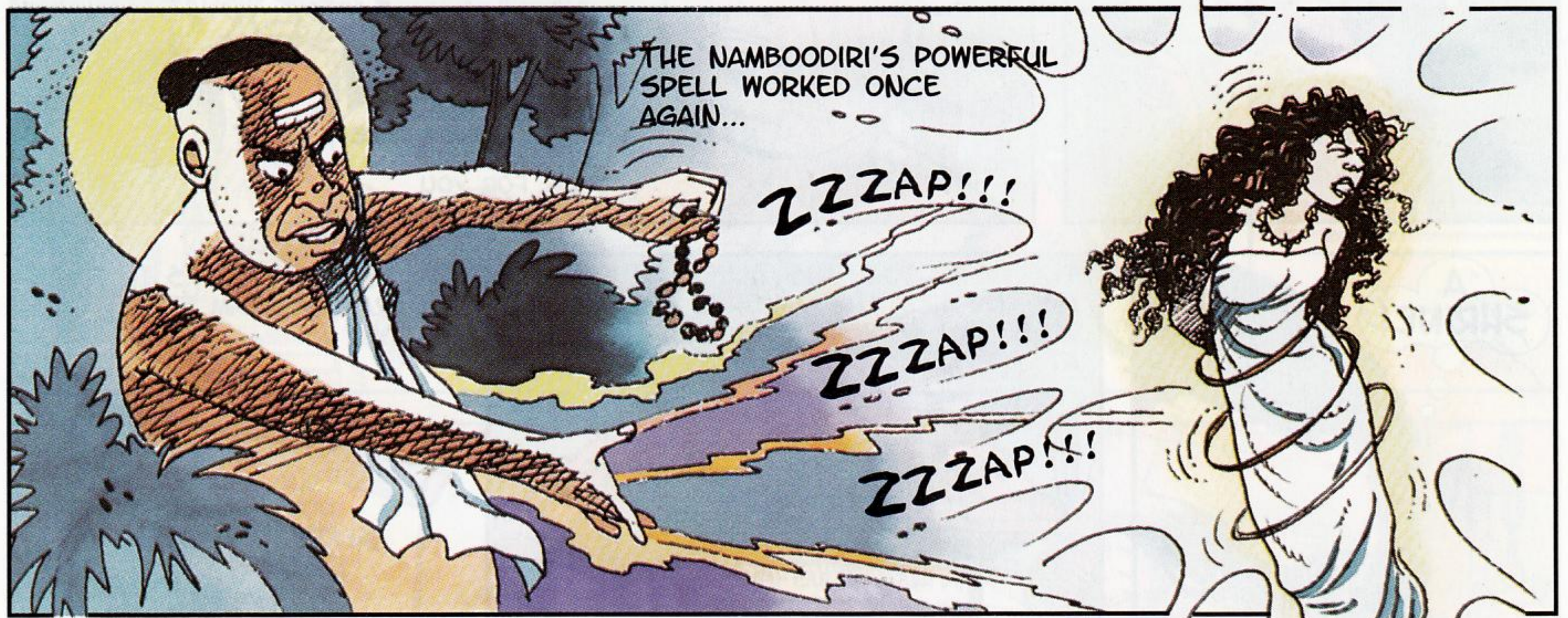
YES TIRUMENI!



I MUST TAKE ANOTHER PATH THIS TIME FOR SHE'S BOUND TO HIDE WHEN SHE SEES ME! AH, THERE SHE IS!



THE NAMBOODIRI WAS BACK ON HIS MISSION...



THE NAMBOODIRI'S POWERFUL SPELL WORKED ONCE AGAIN...

ZZZAP!!!

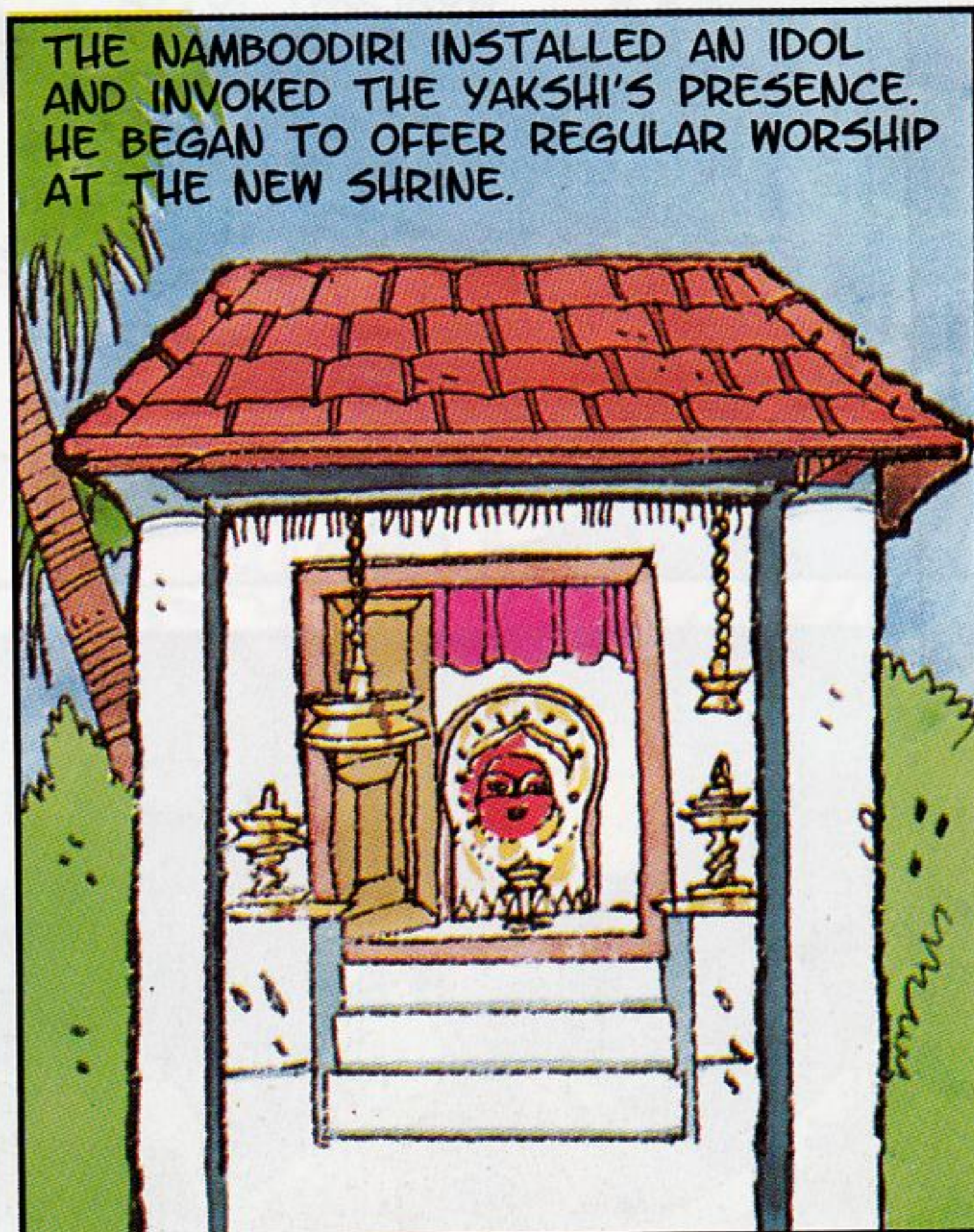
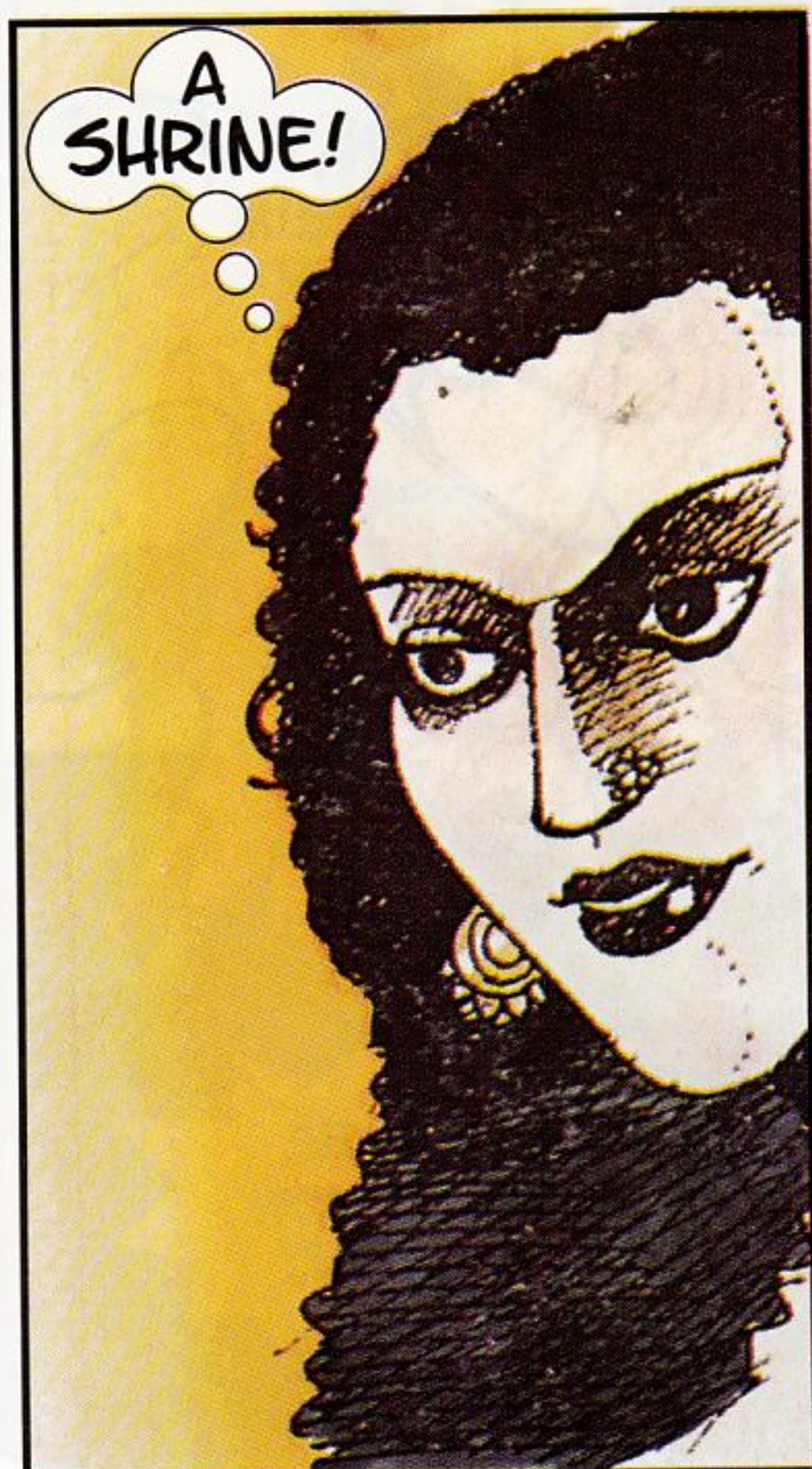
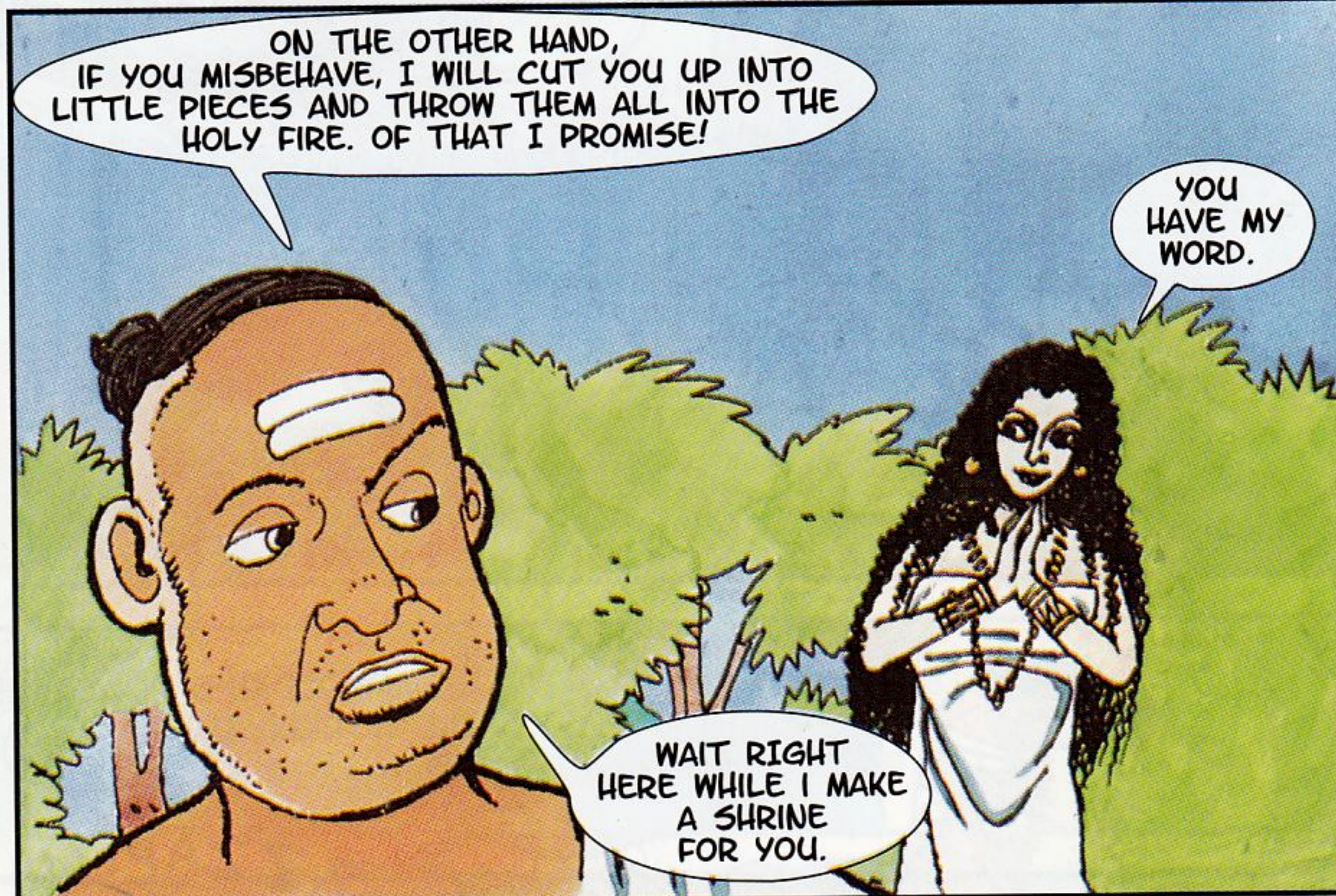
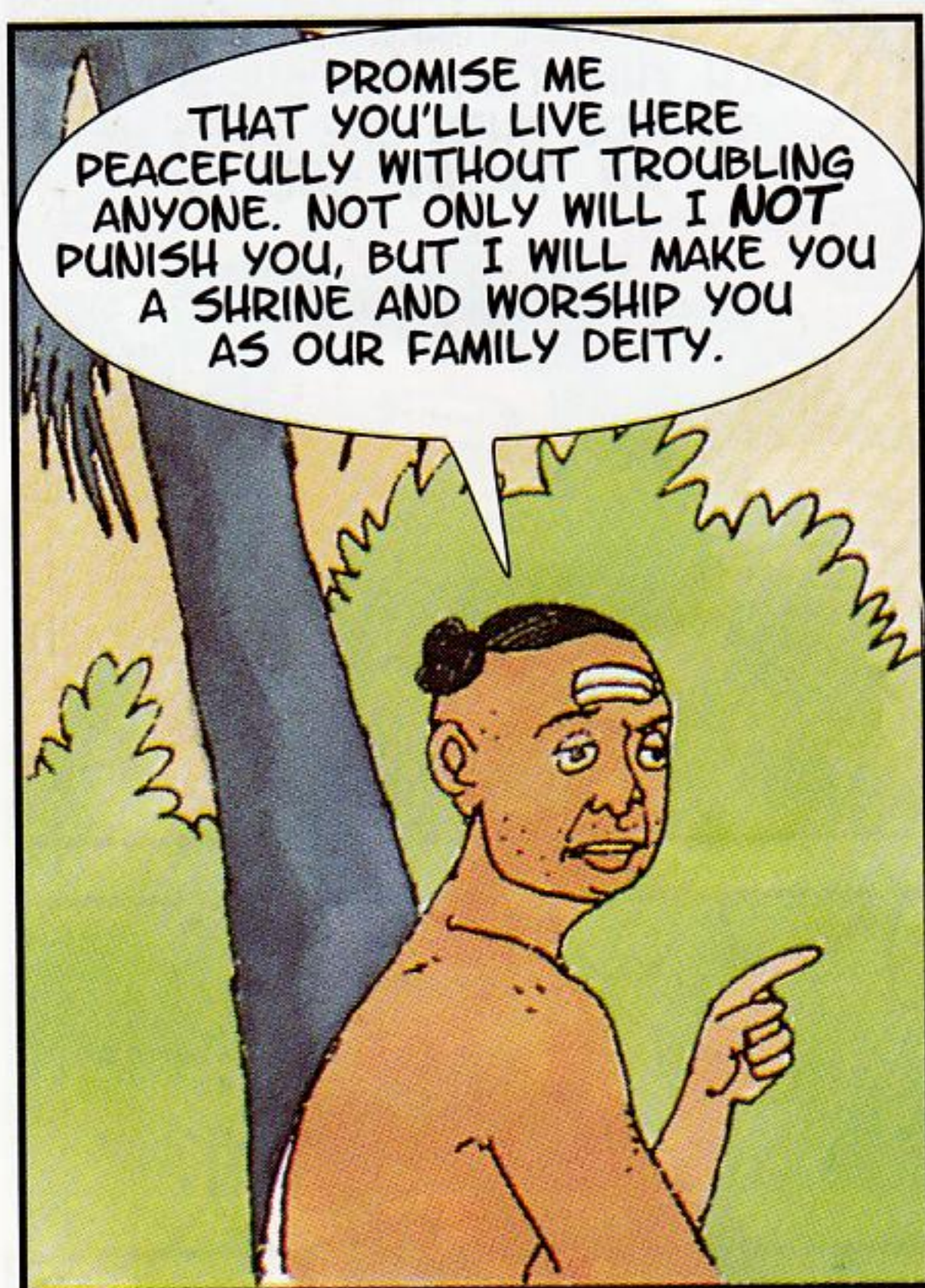
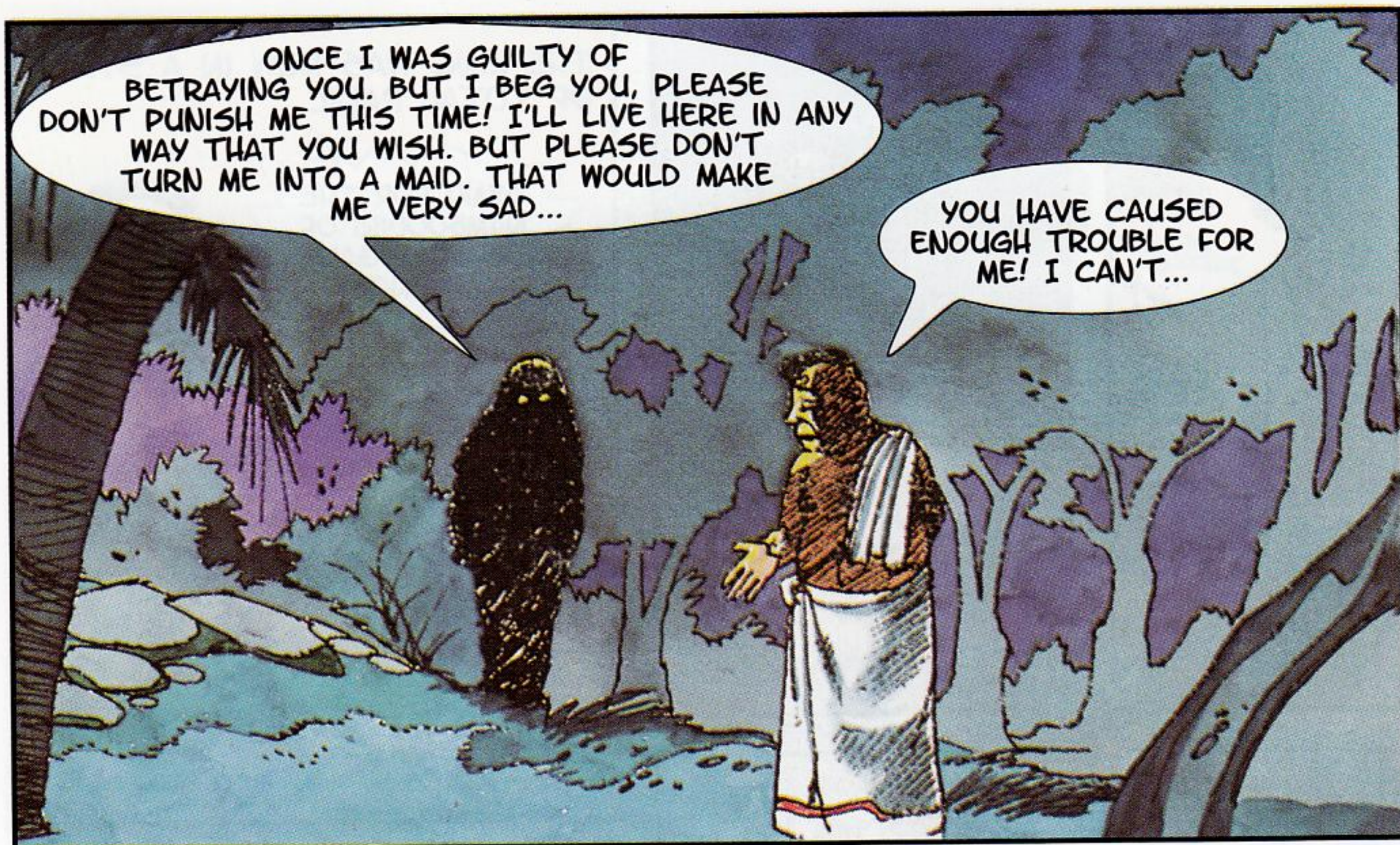
ZZZAP!!!

ZZZAP!!!

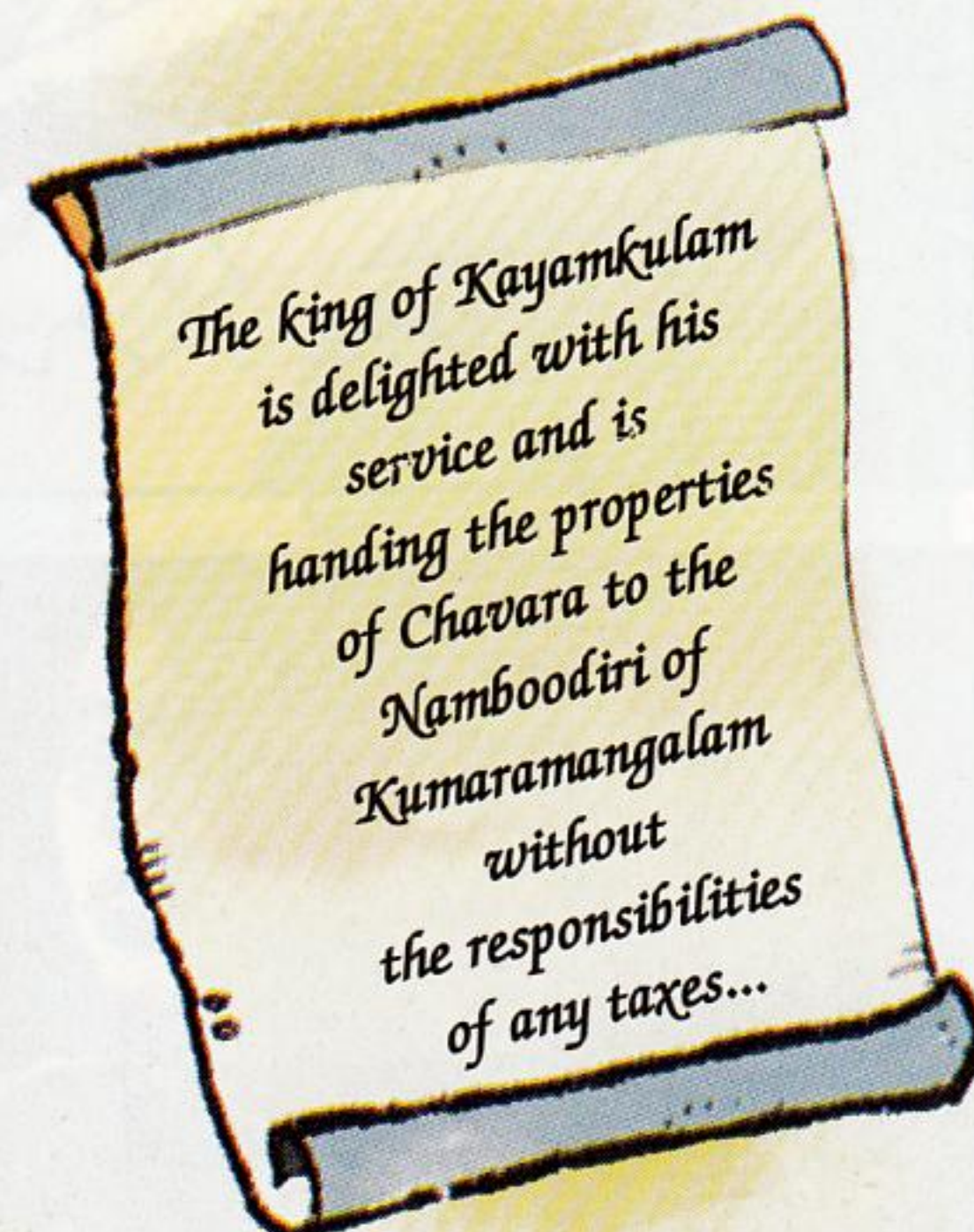


YOUR GAME IS OVER! NOW FOLLOW ME!





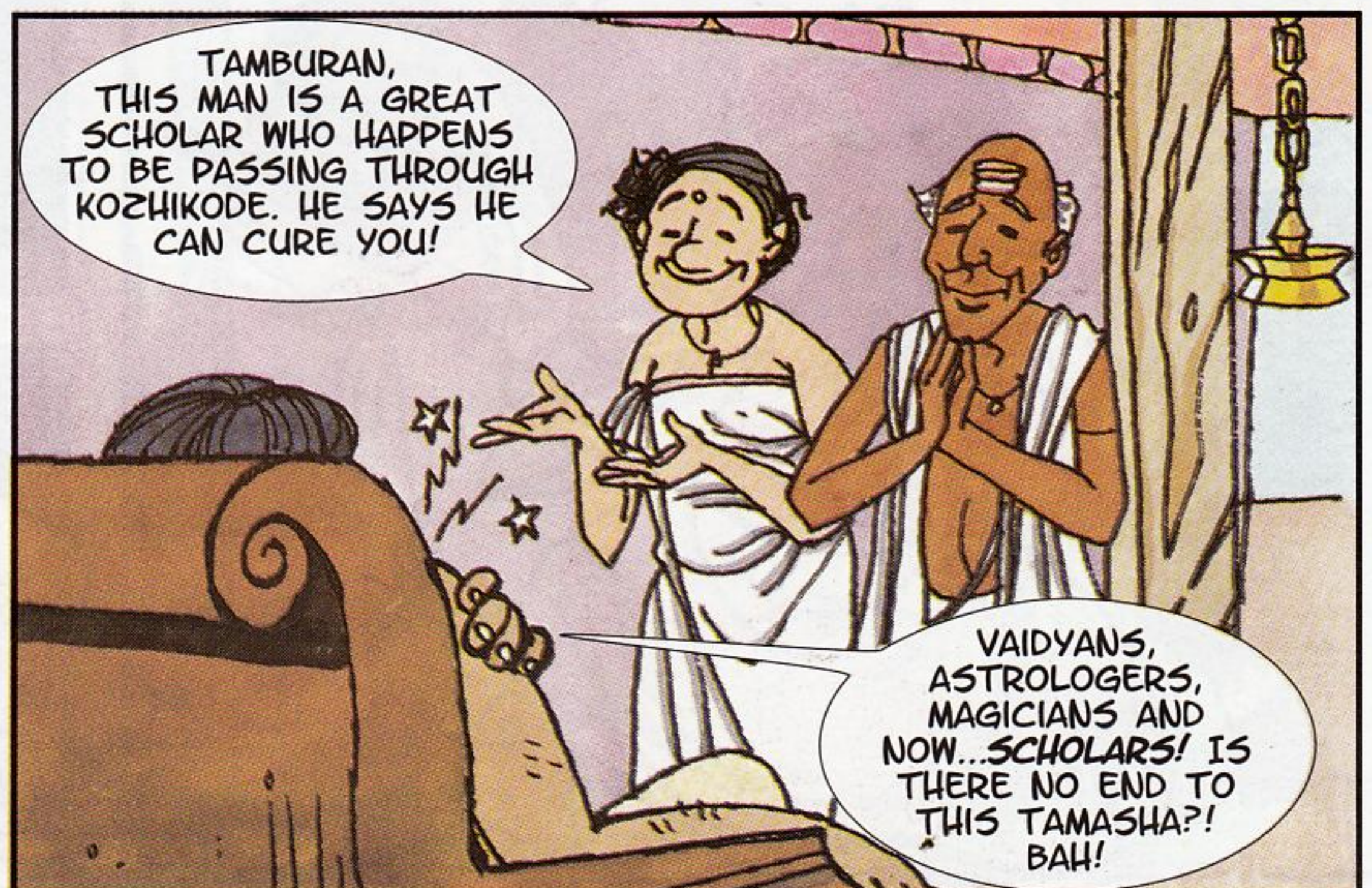
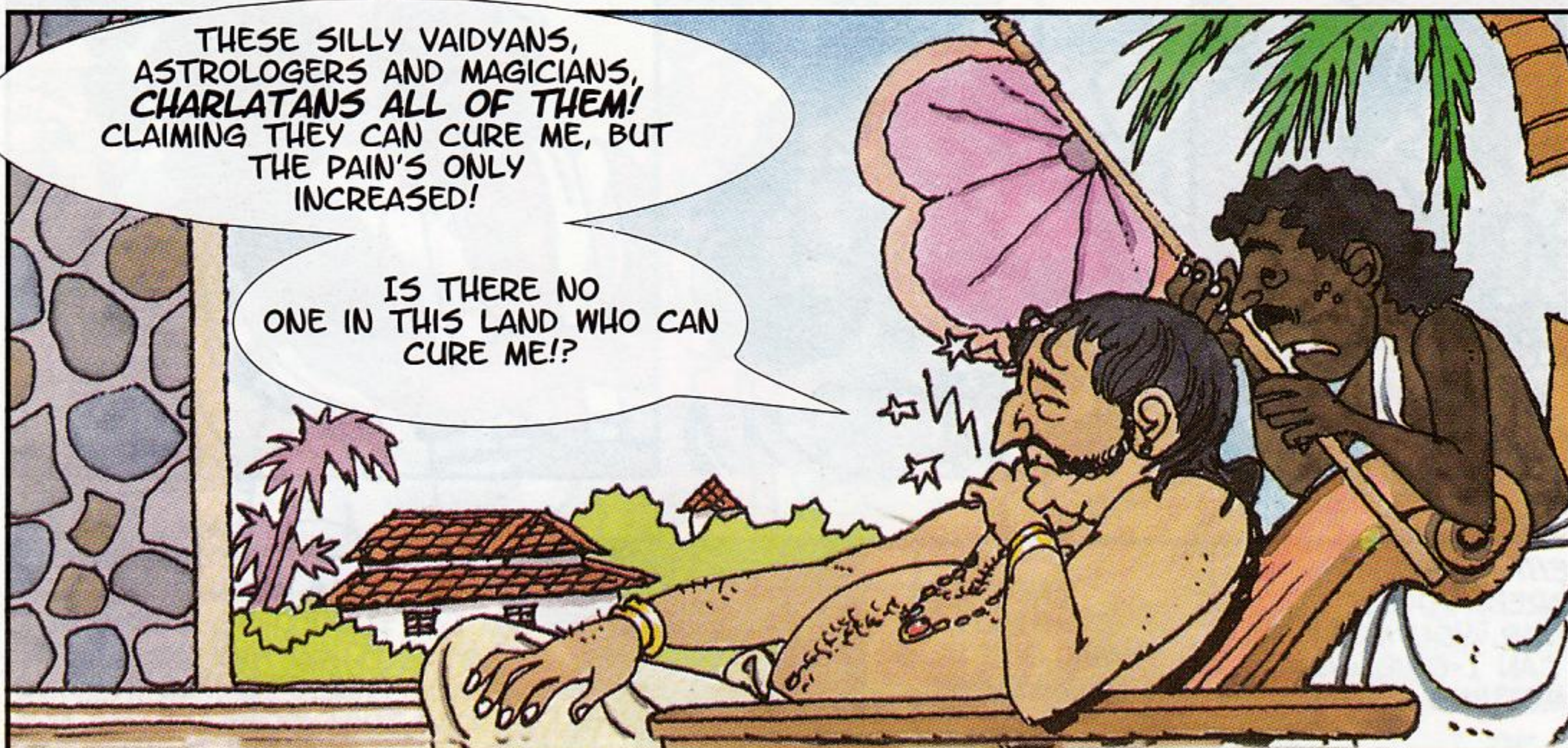
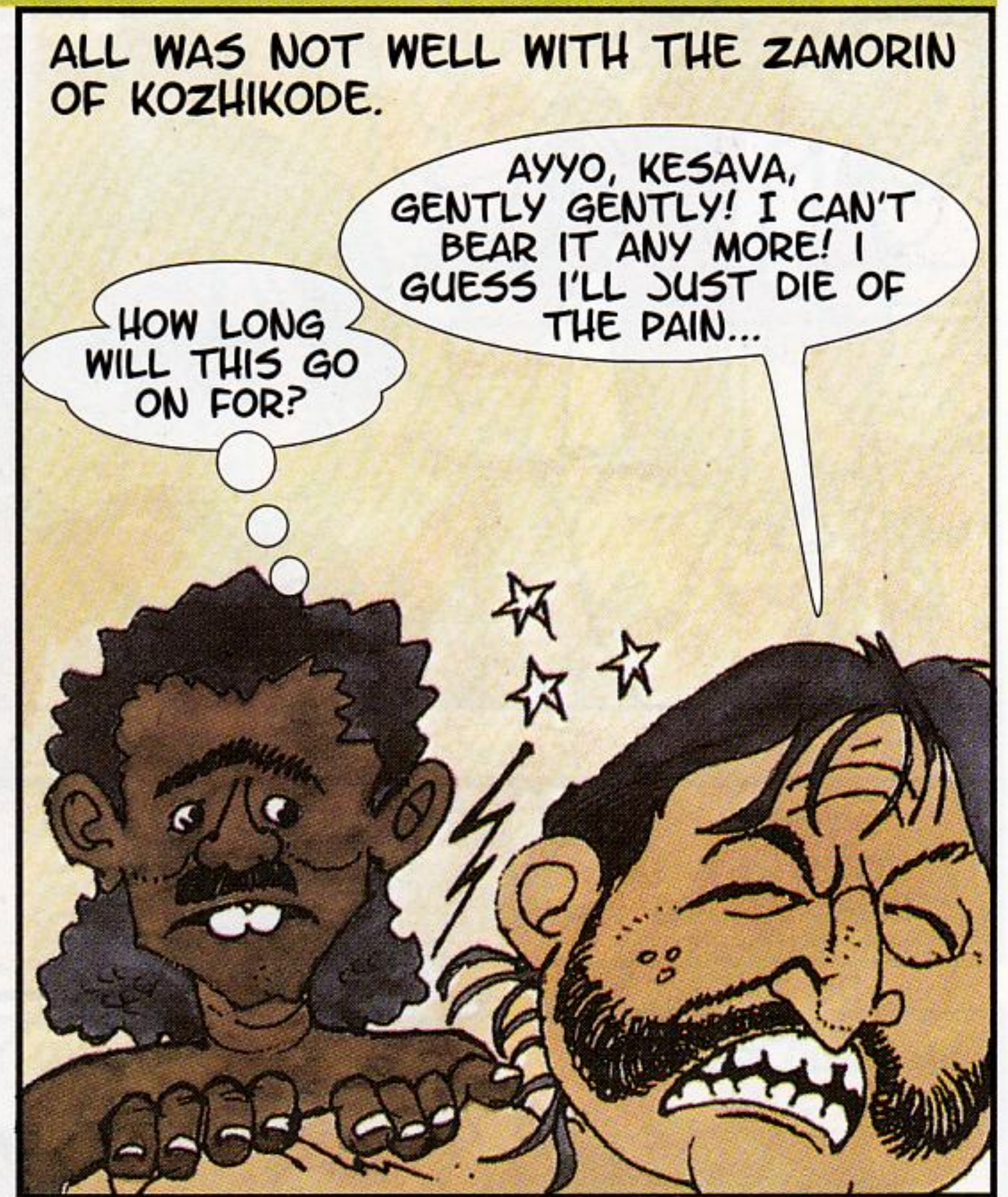
THE SHRINE EXISTS IN KUMARAMANGALAM EVEN TODAY.



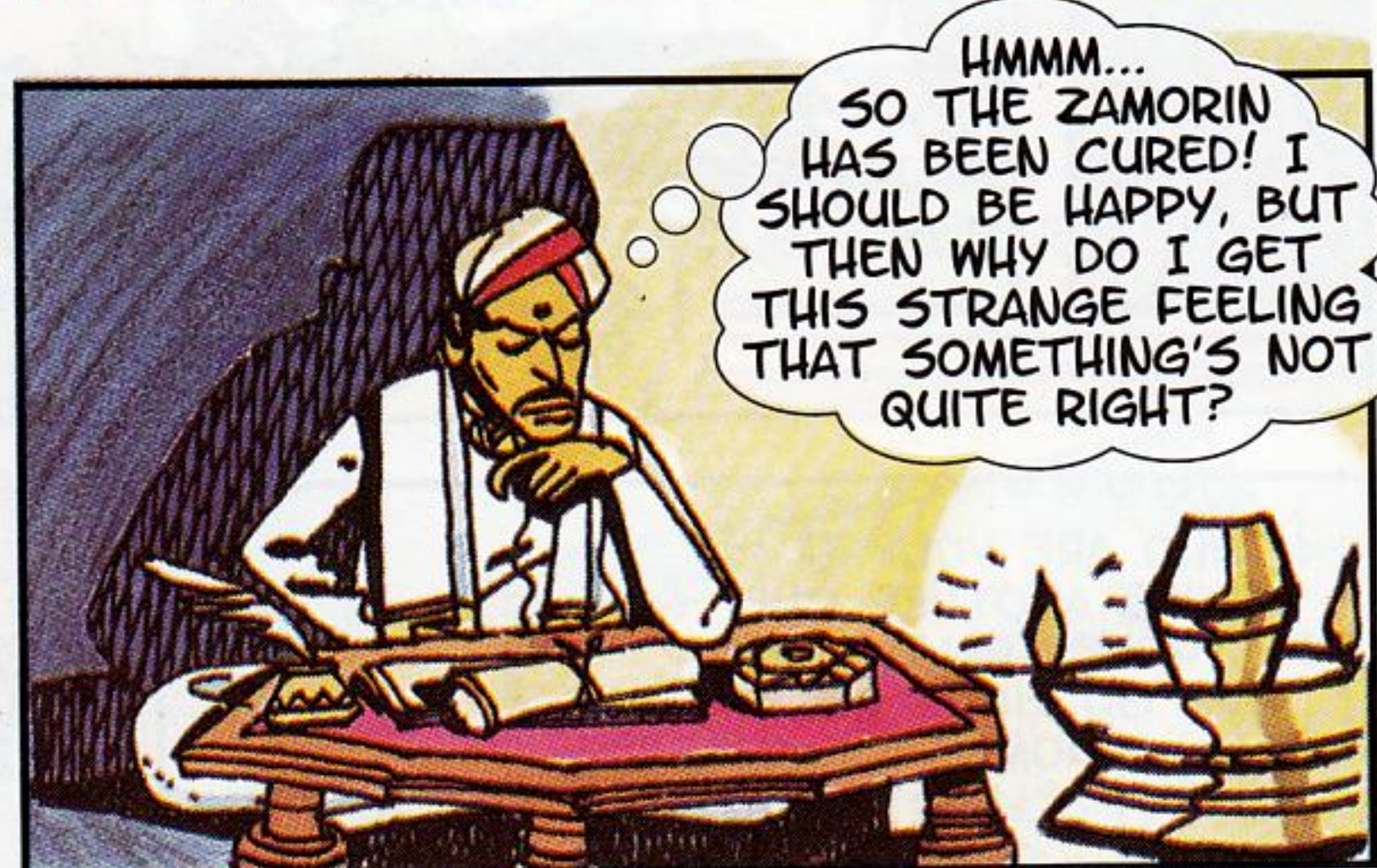
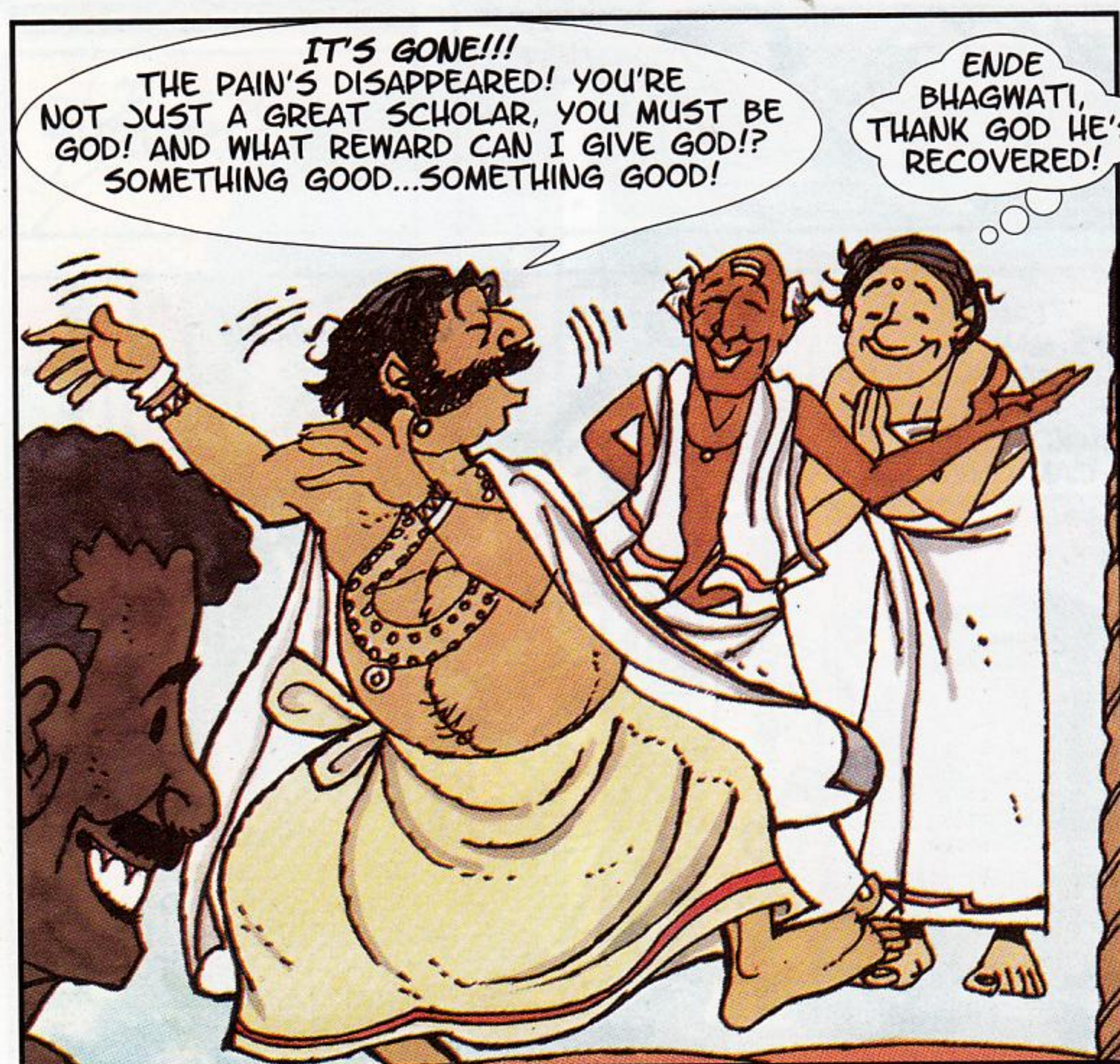
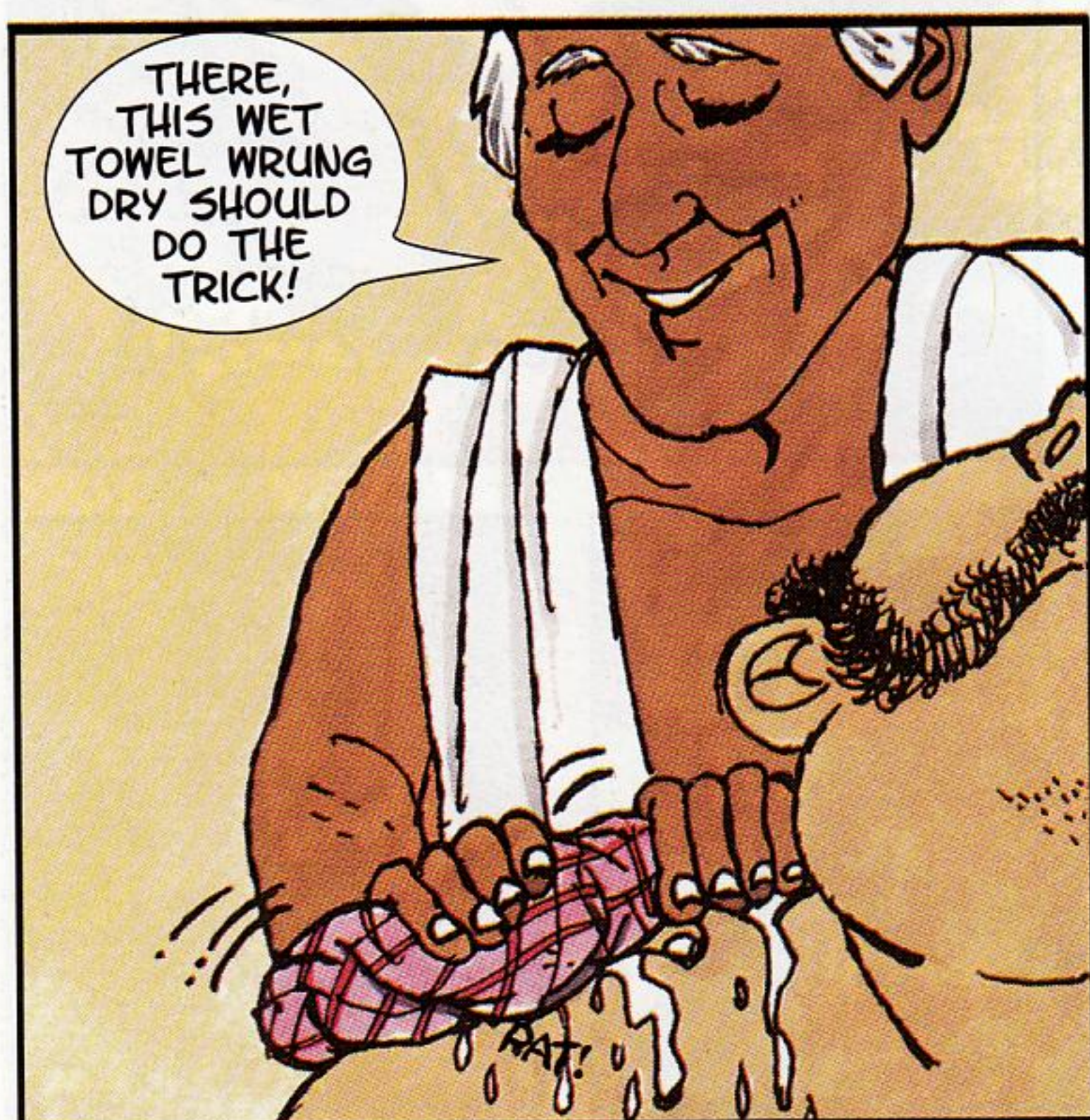
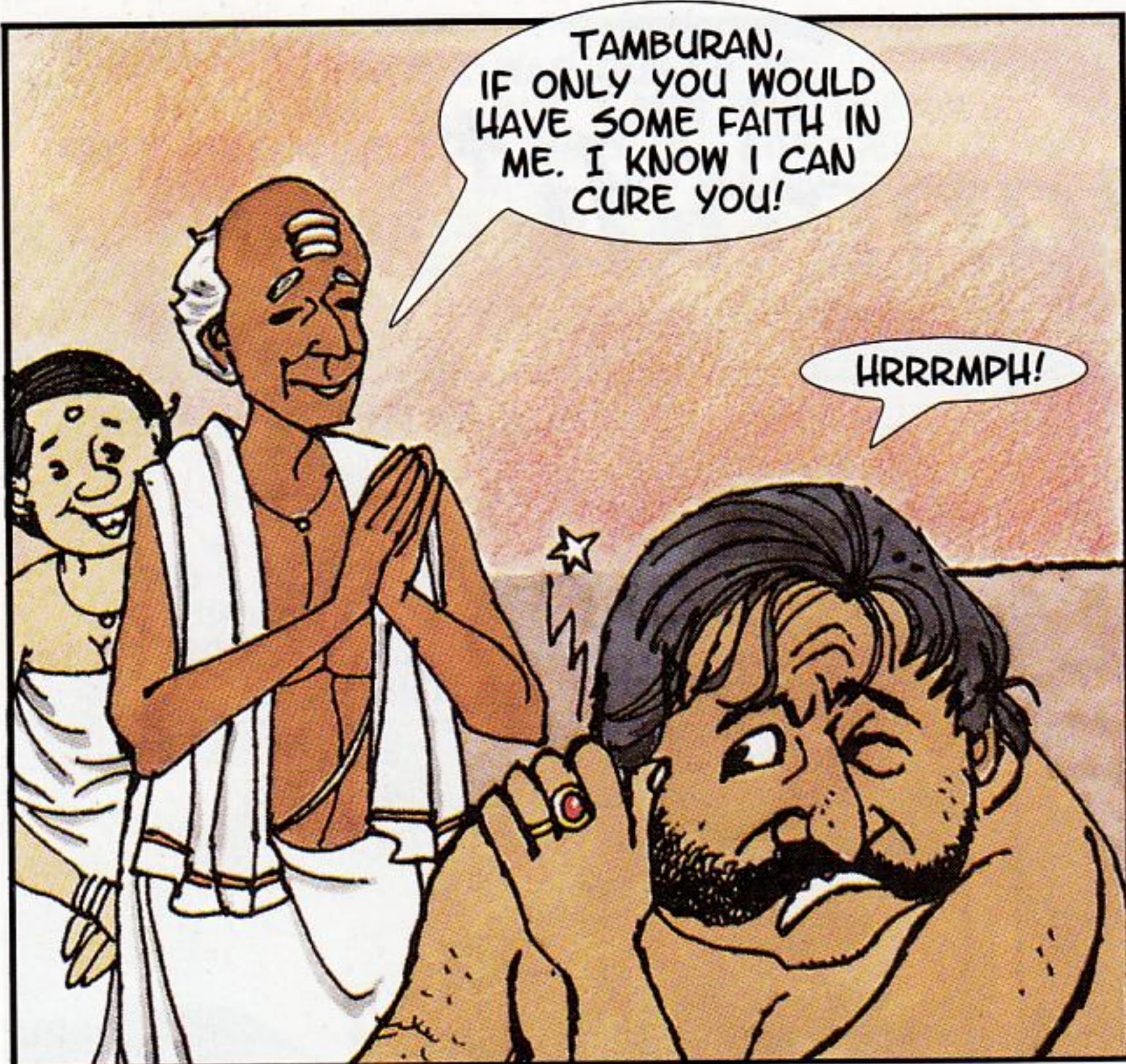
THE END



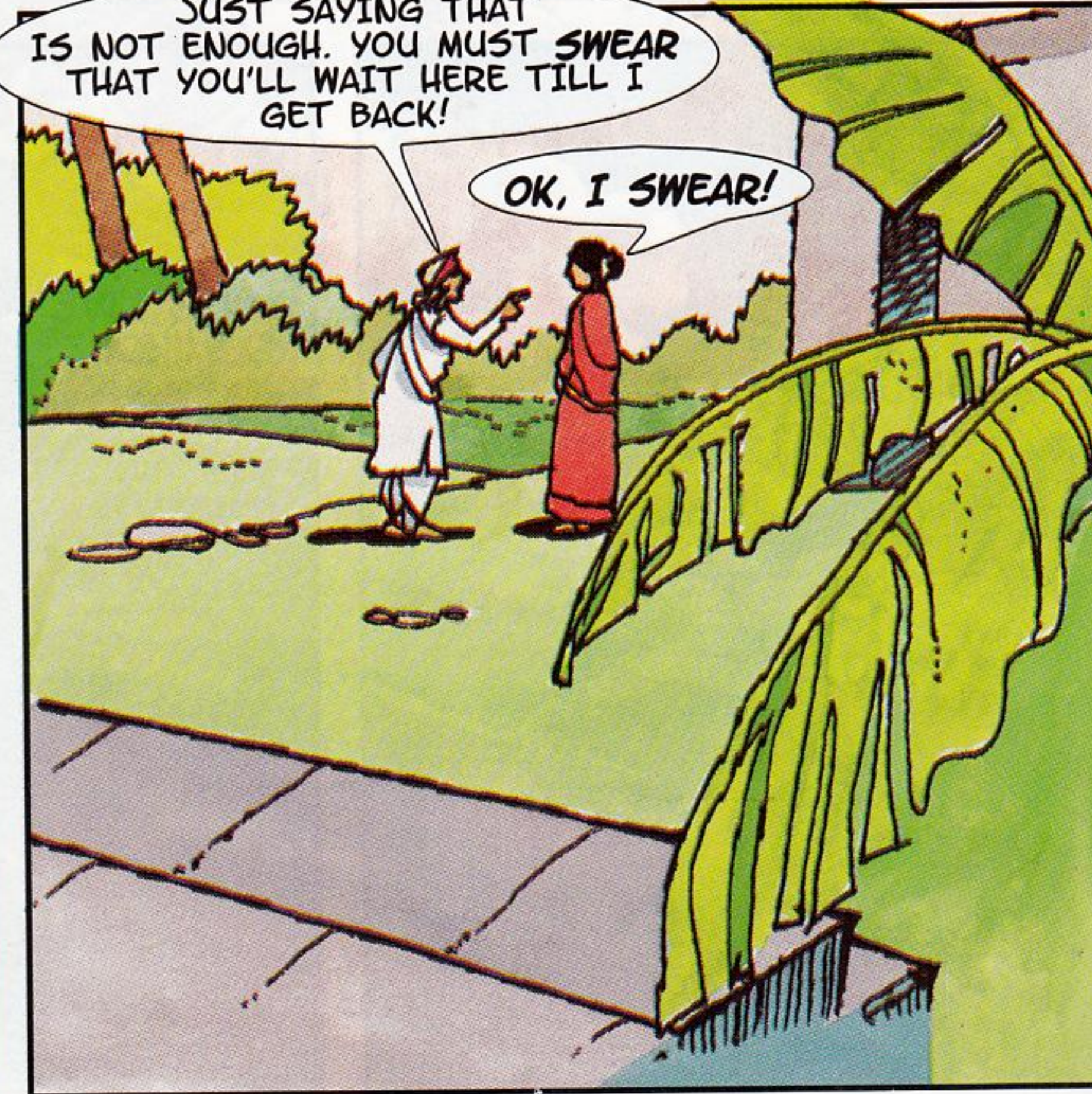
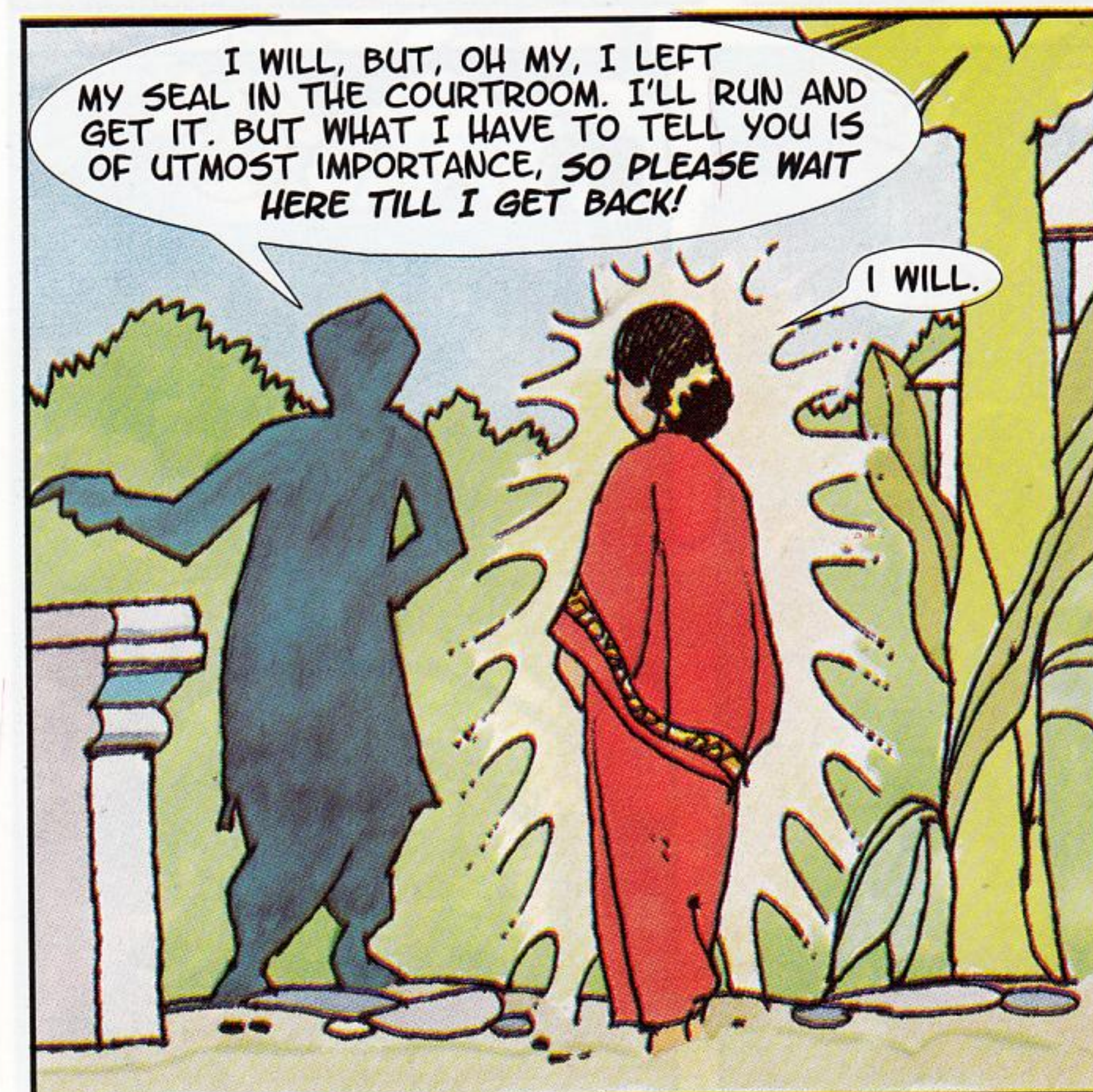
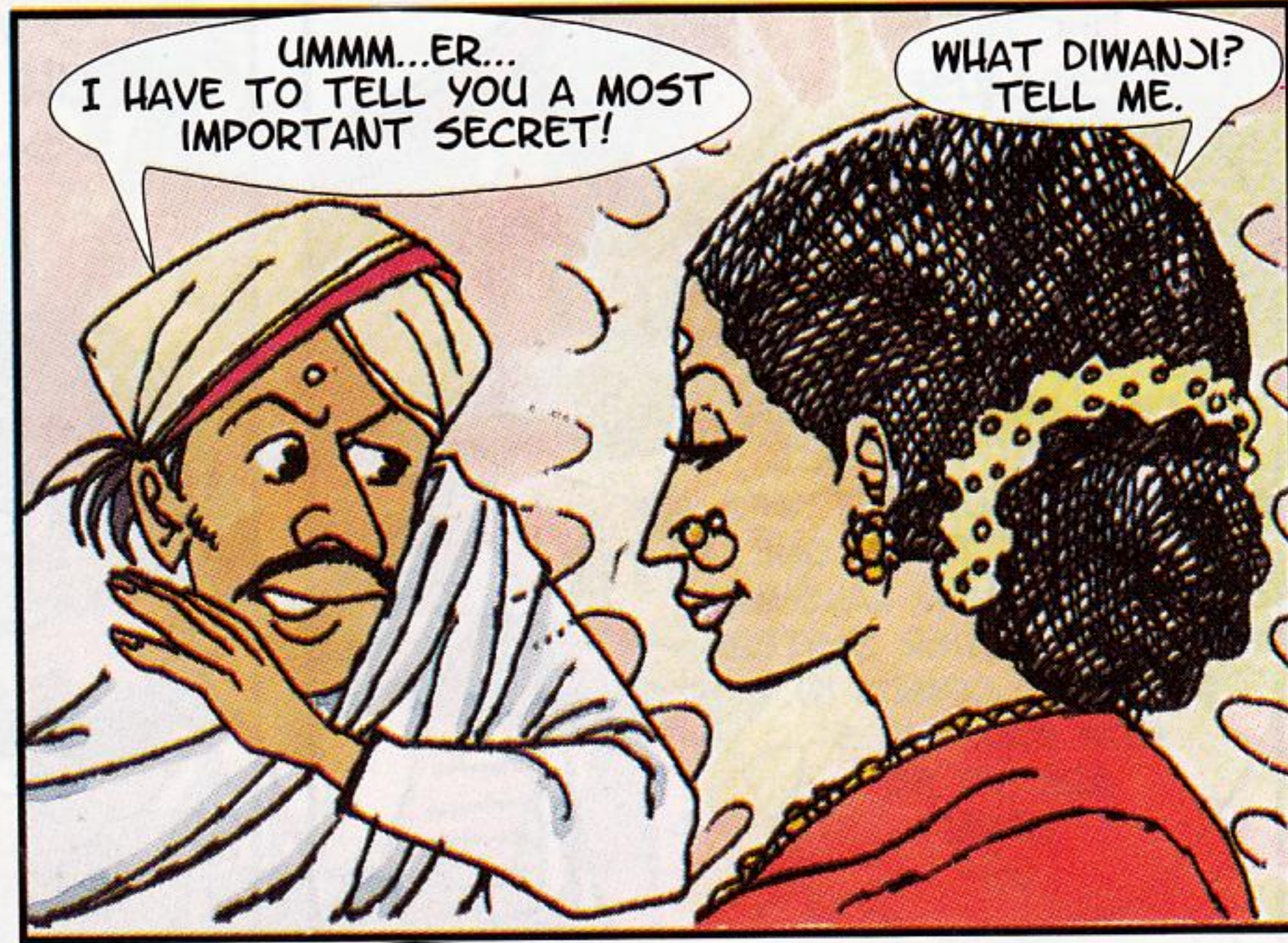
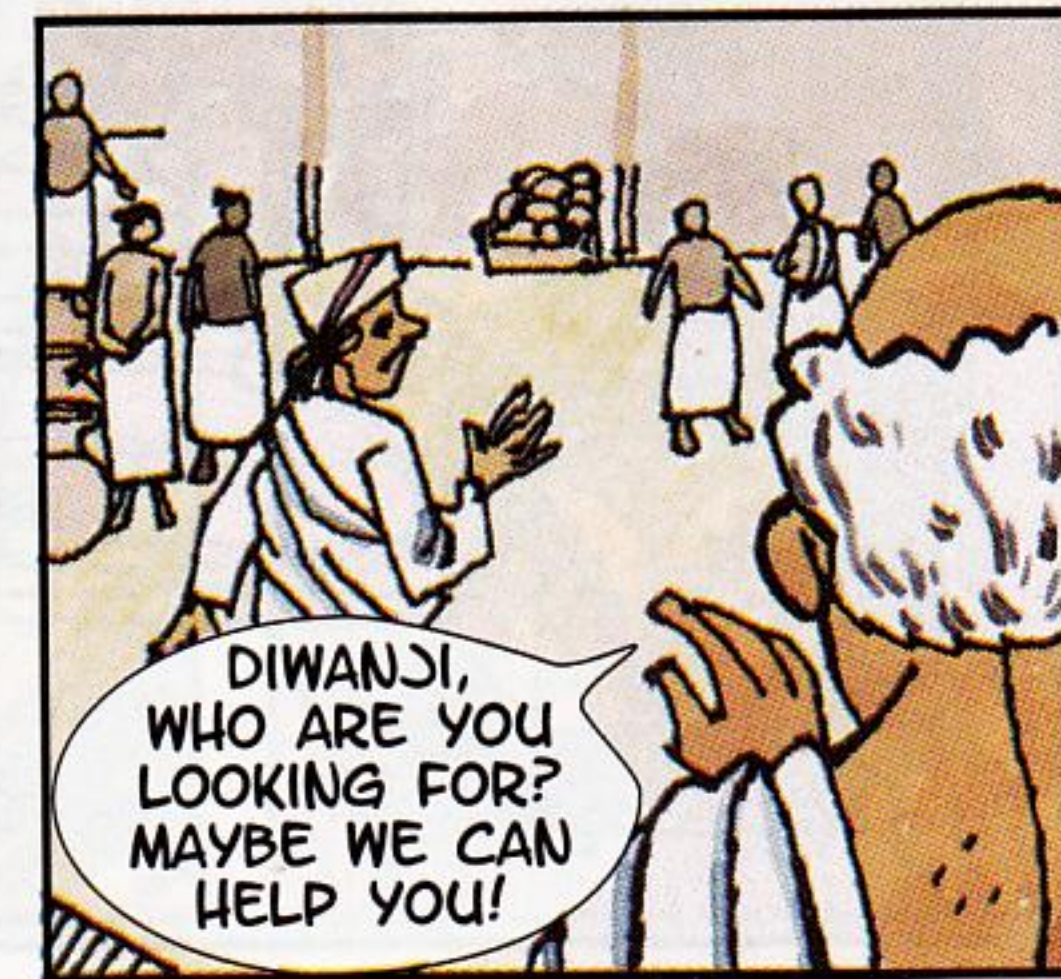
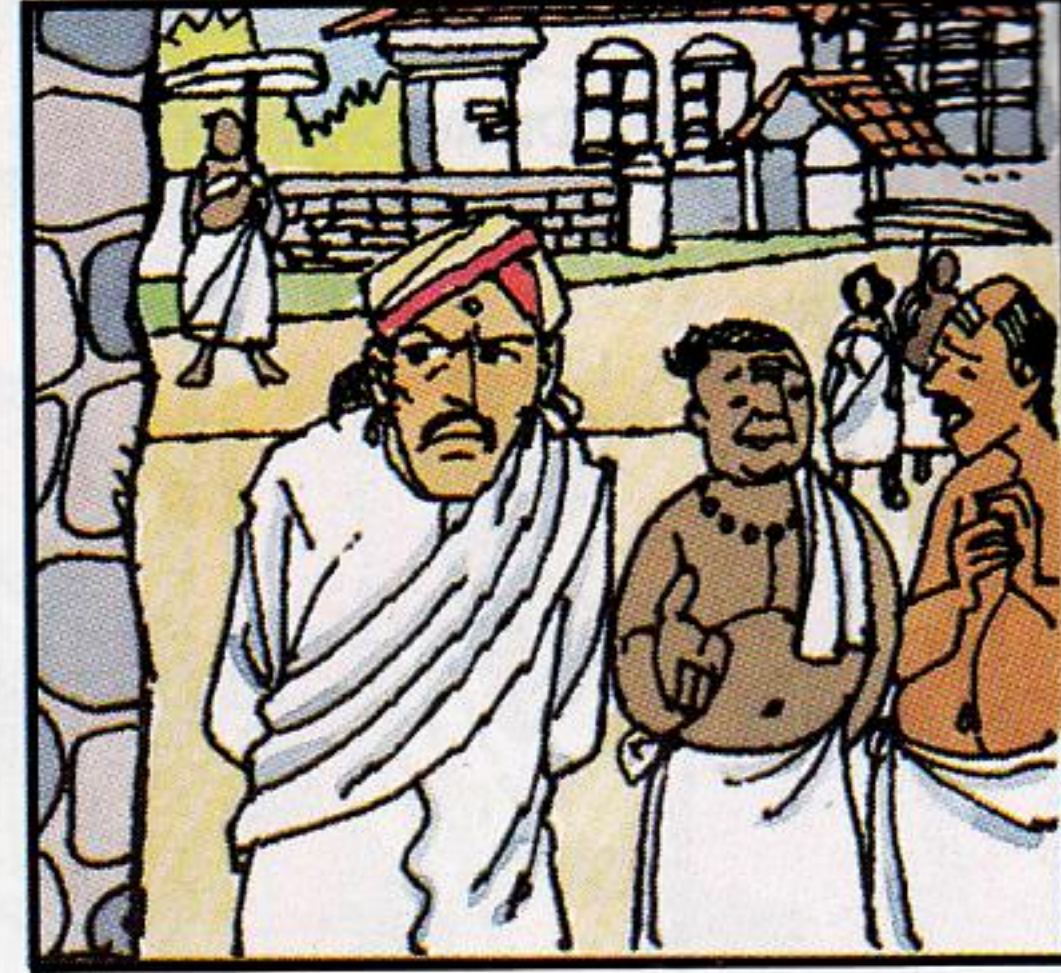
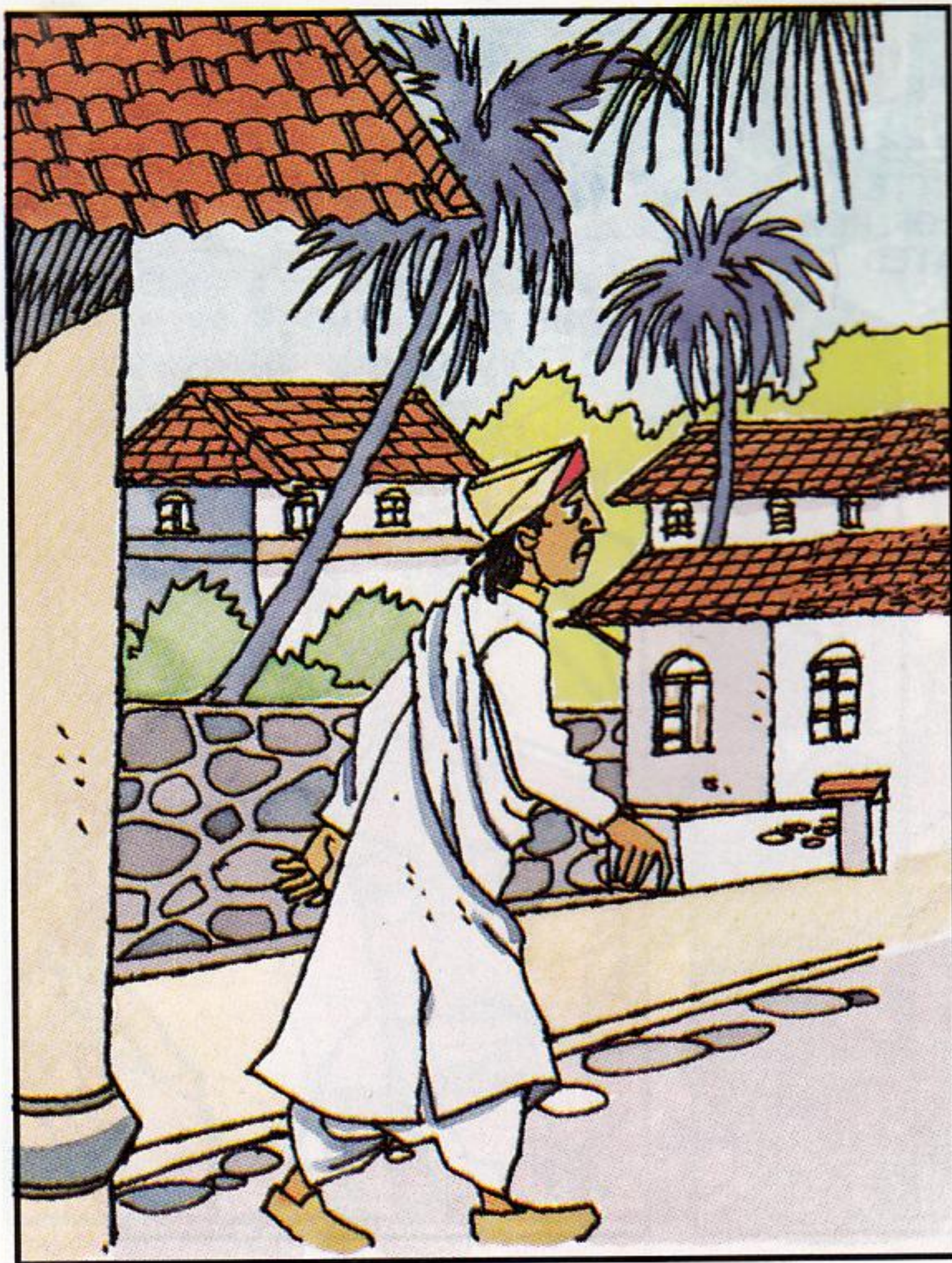
# Kozhikottangadi\*



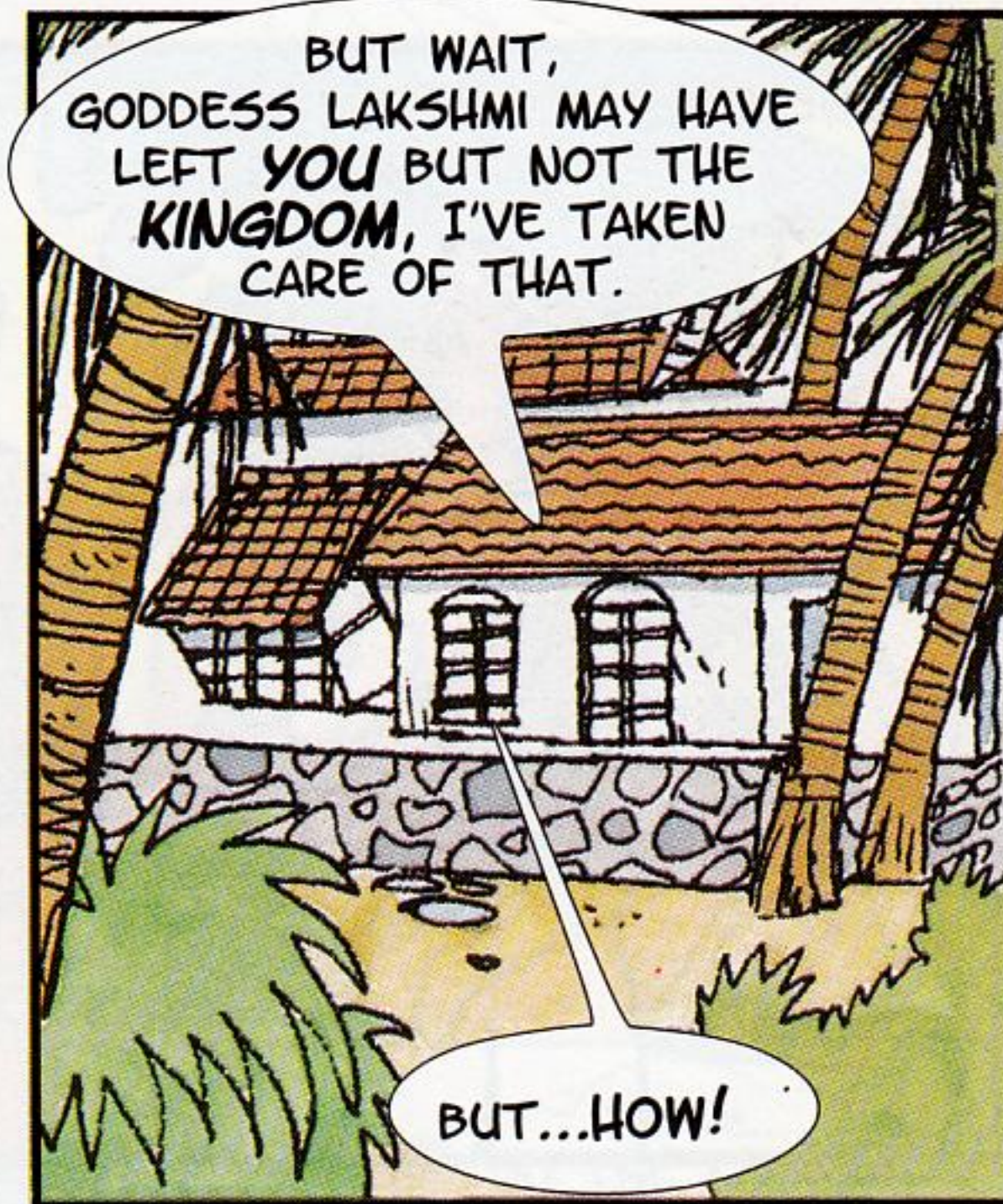
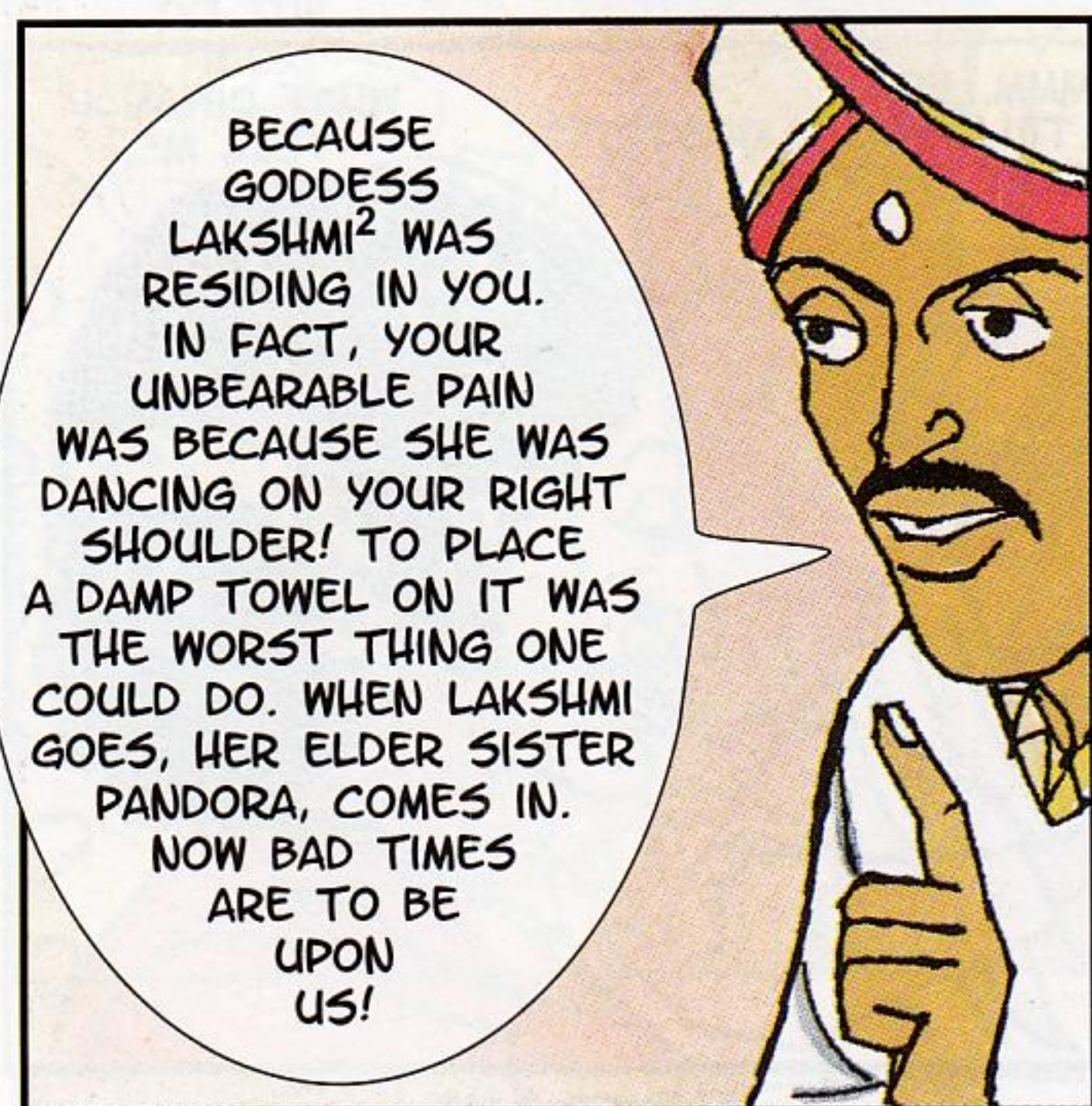
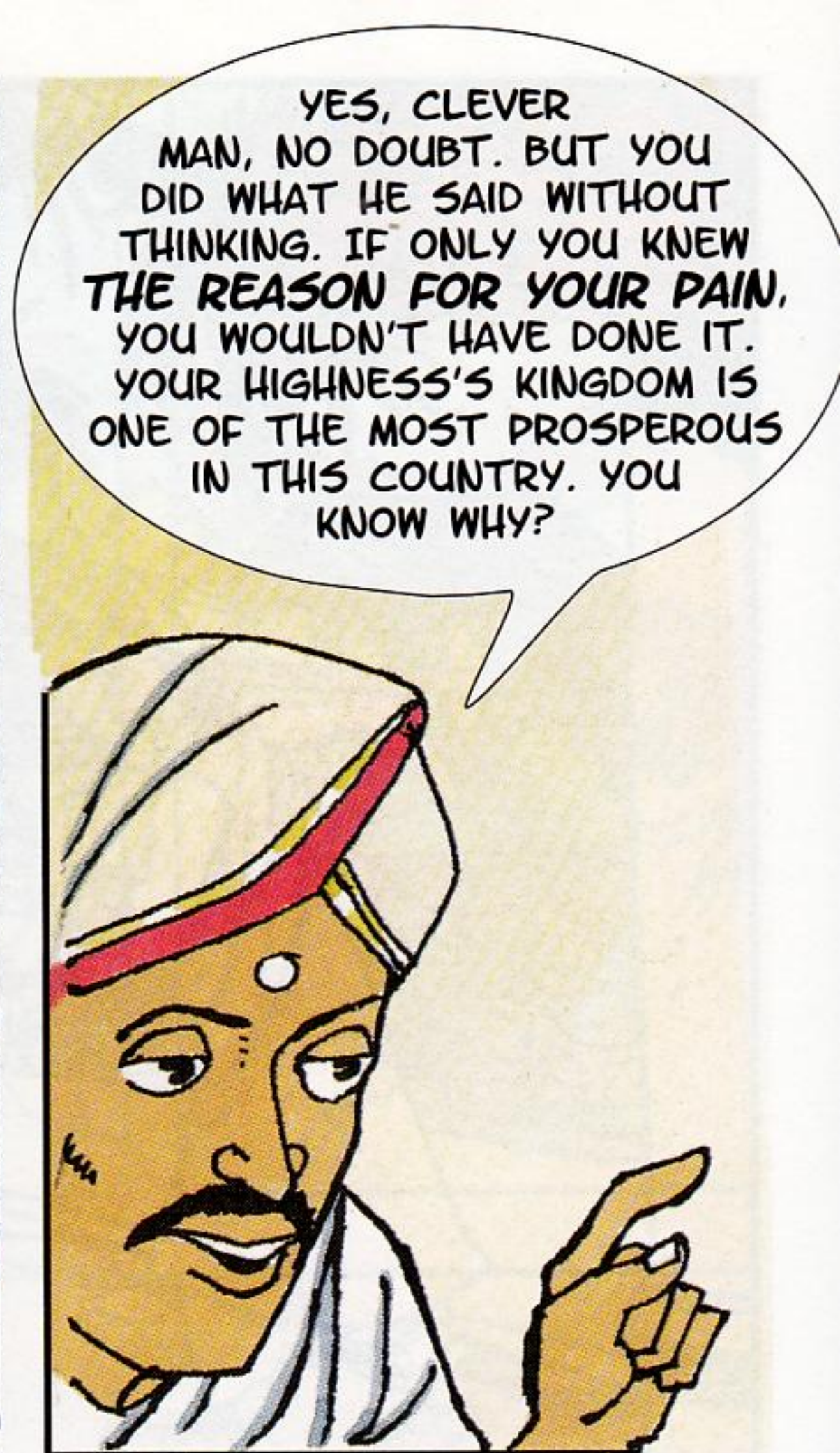




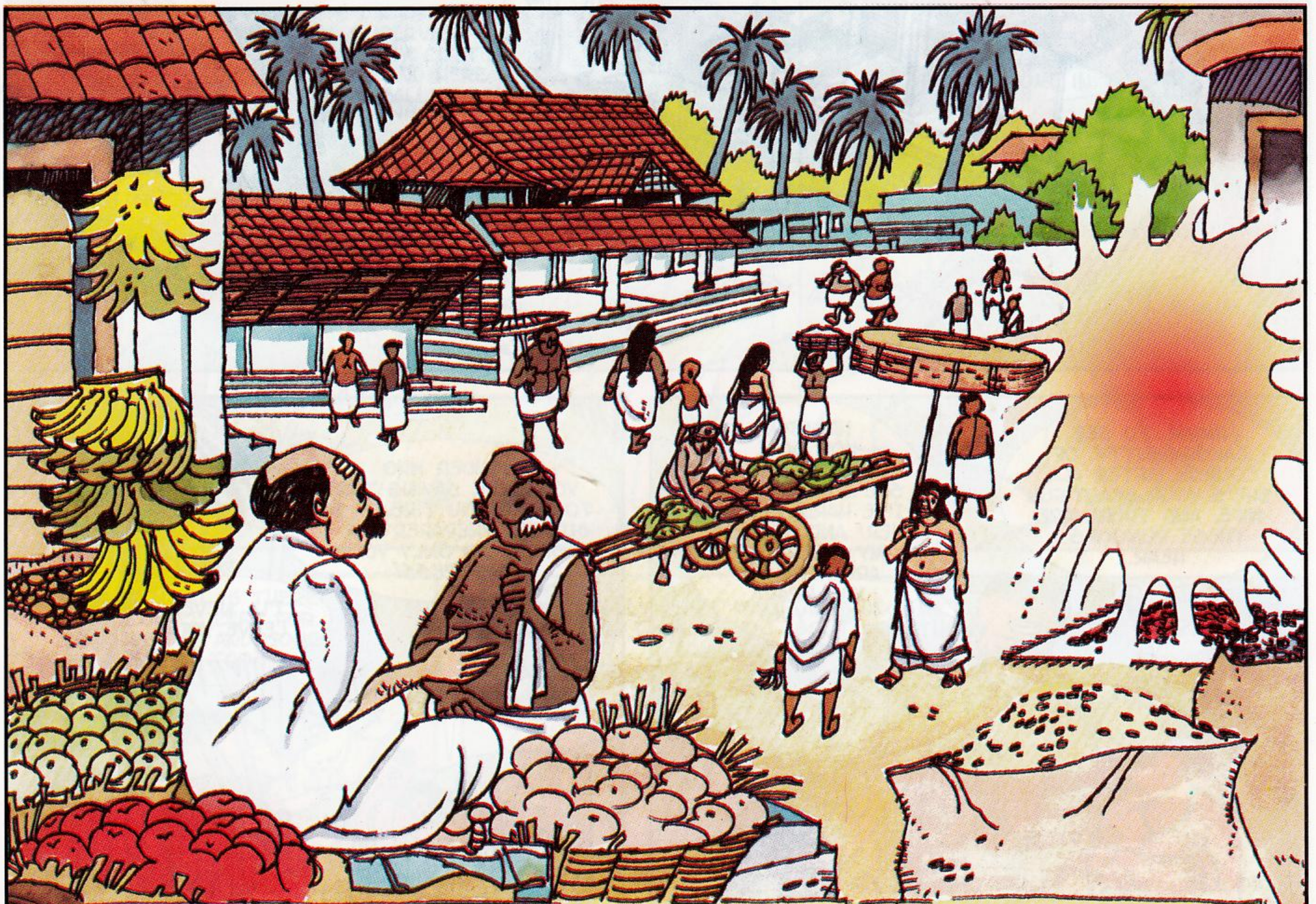












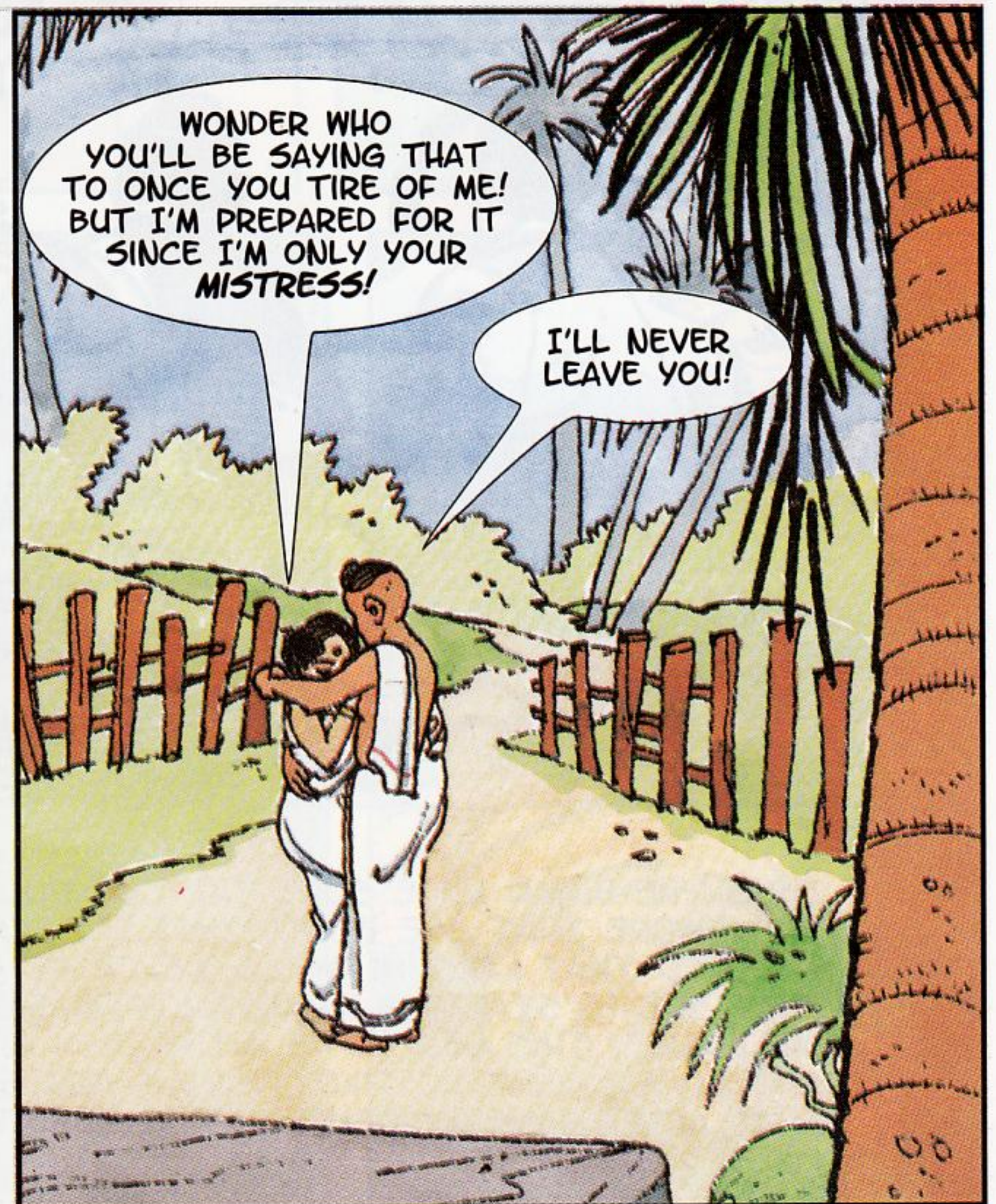
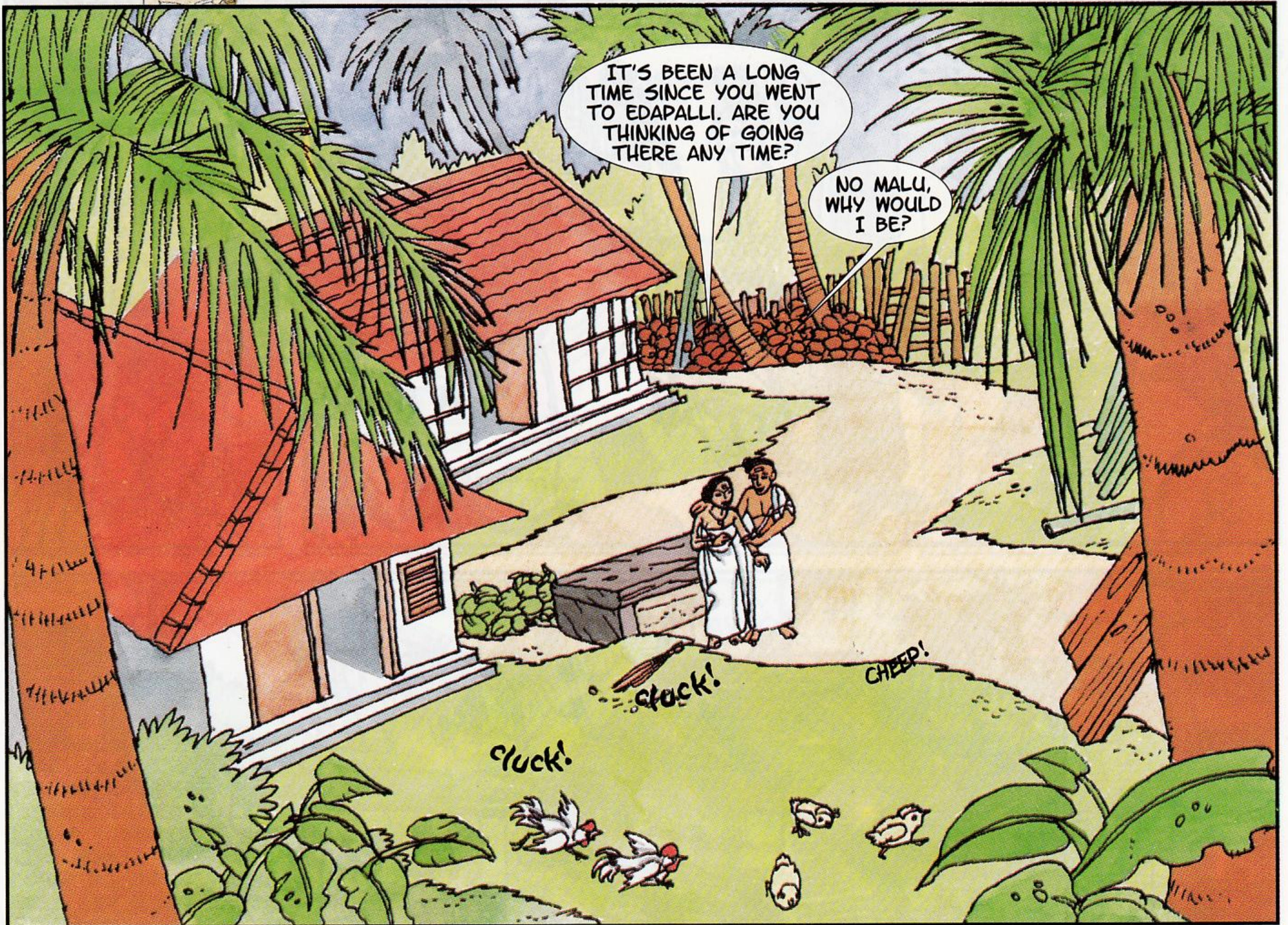
THUS THE DIWAN MADE SURE THAT HE WOULD NEVER BE ABLE TO RETURN TO THE LADY WHO SWORE THAT SHE WOULD WAIT FOR HIM TILL HE GOT BACK. BY KILLING HIMSELF HE ENSURED THAT LAKSHMI WOULD NEVER BE ABLE TO LEAVE KOZHIKODE. IT IS BELIEVED THAT SHE IS STANDING IN KOZHIKOTTANGADI EVEN TODAY, INFUSING IT WITH A SPECIAL BRILLIANCE. THIS LEGEND IS INTIMATELY INTERTWINED WITH LOCAL HISTORY. MAYBE WE SHOULD ALL VISIT KOZHIKOTTANGADI AND SEE IT FOR OURSELVES. THERE'S ALSO A STORY THAT AFTER THIS INCIDENT, NOT MUCH LATER, THE ZAMORIN LOST HIS KINGDOM.

THE END

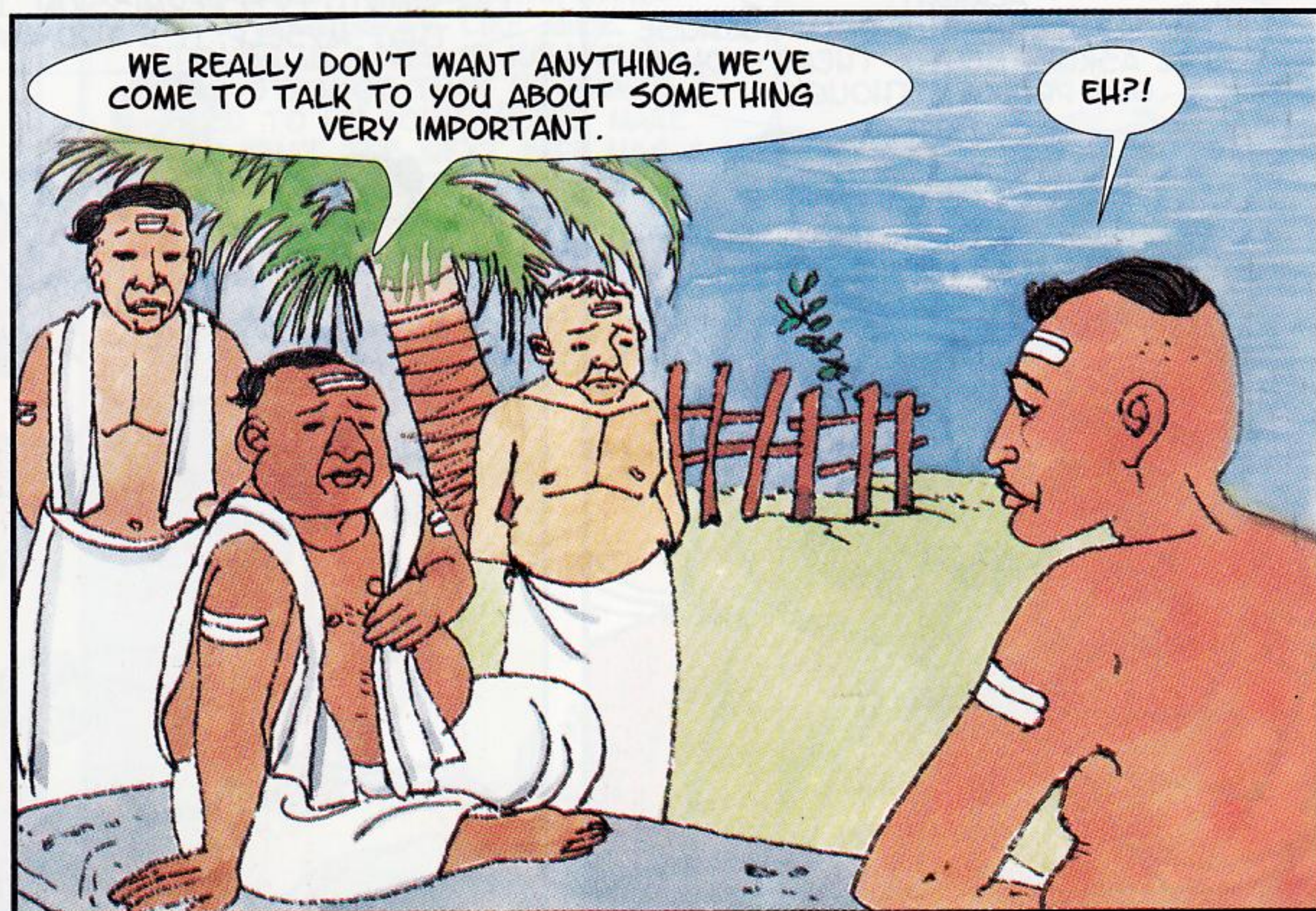
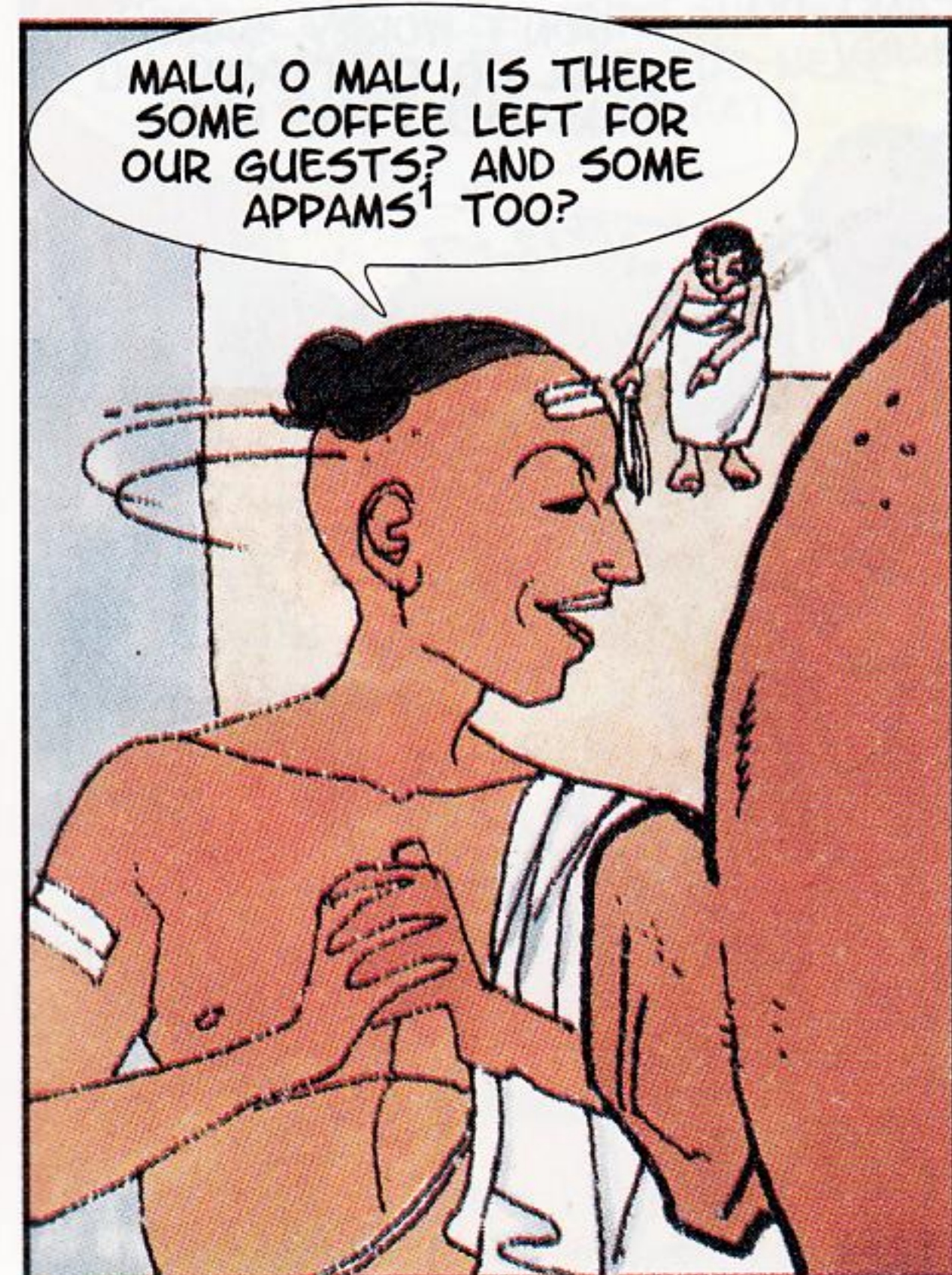
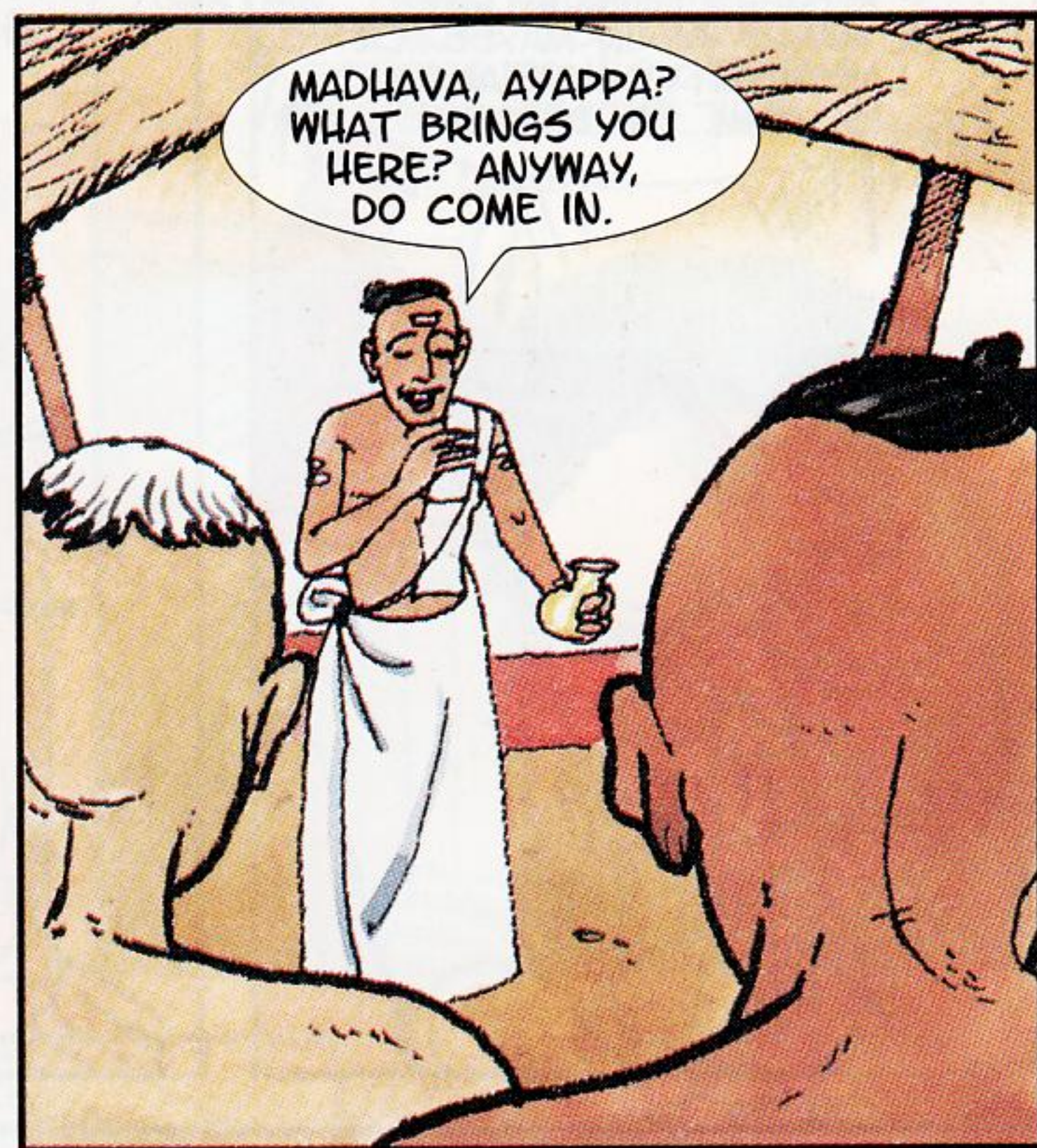
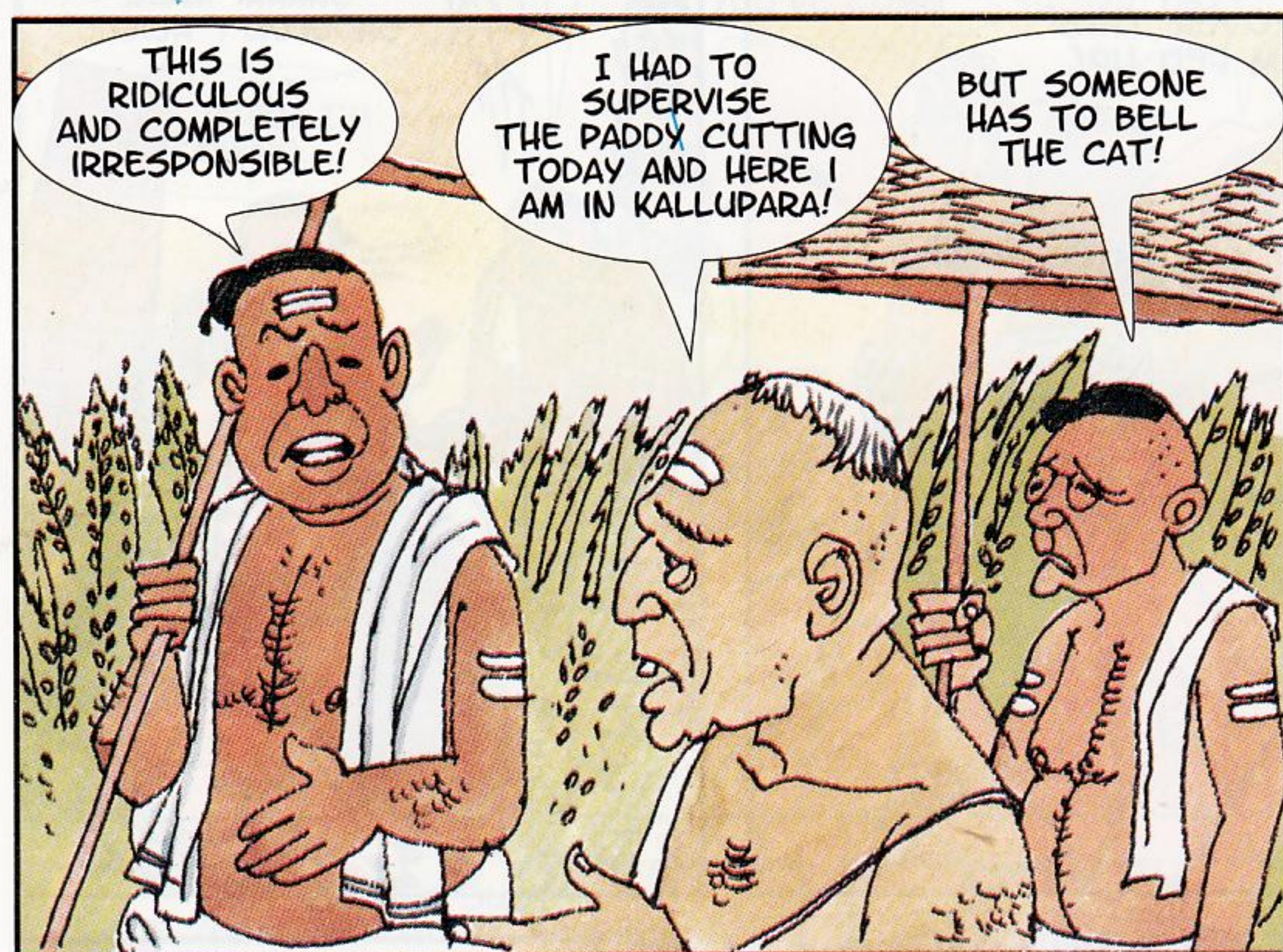
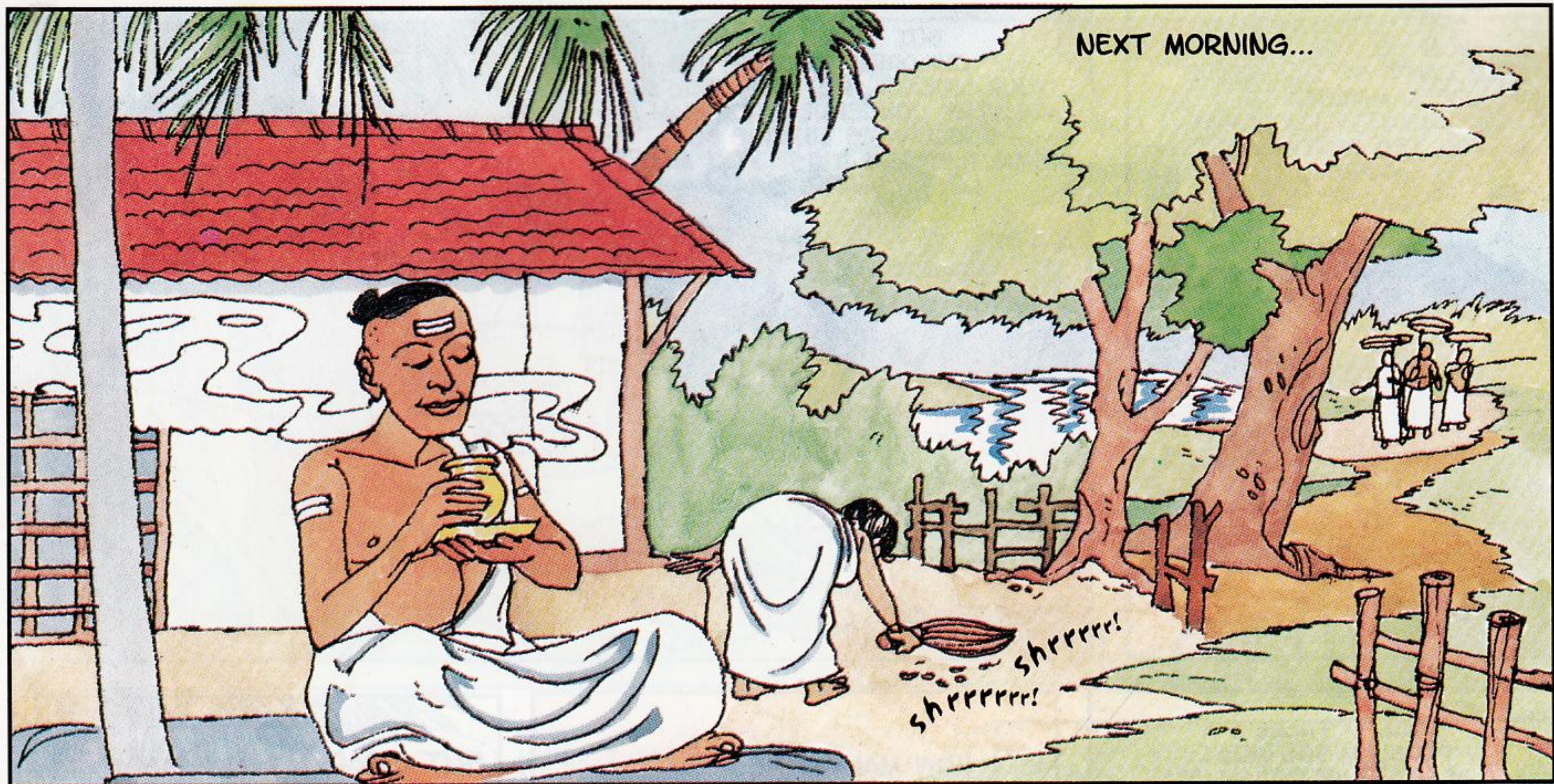




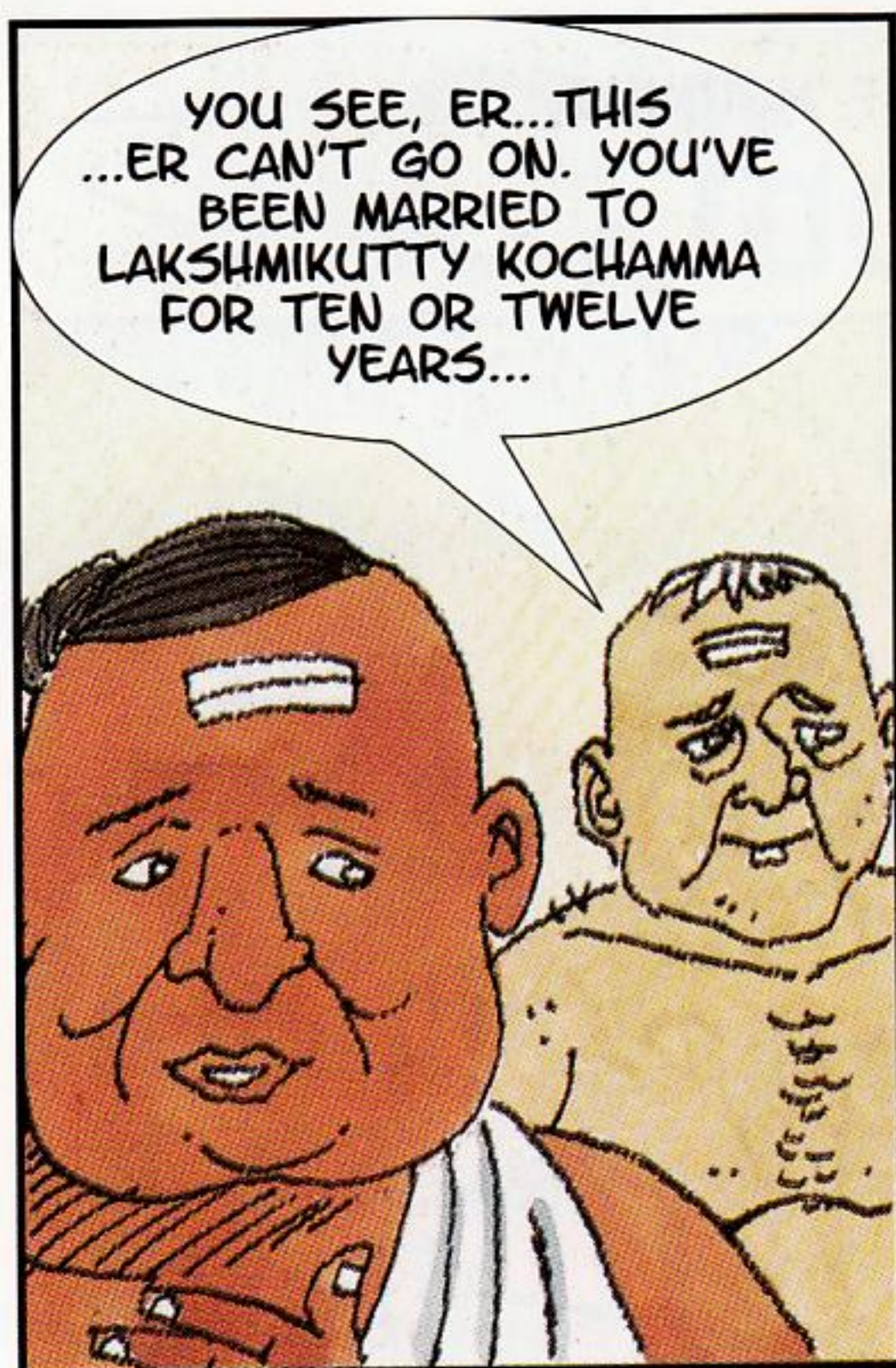
# Padmanabhan's Clever Wife



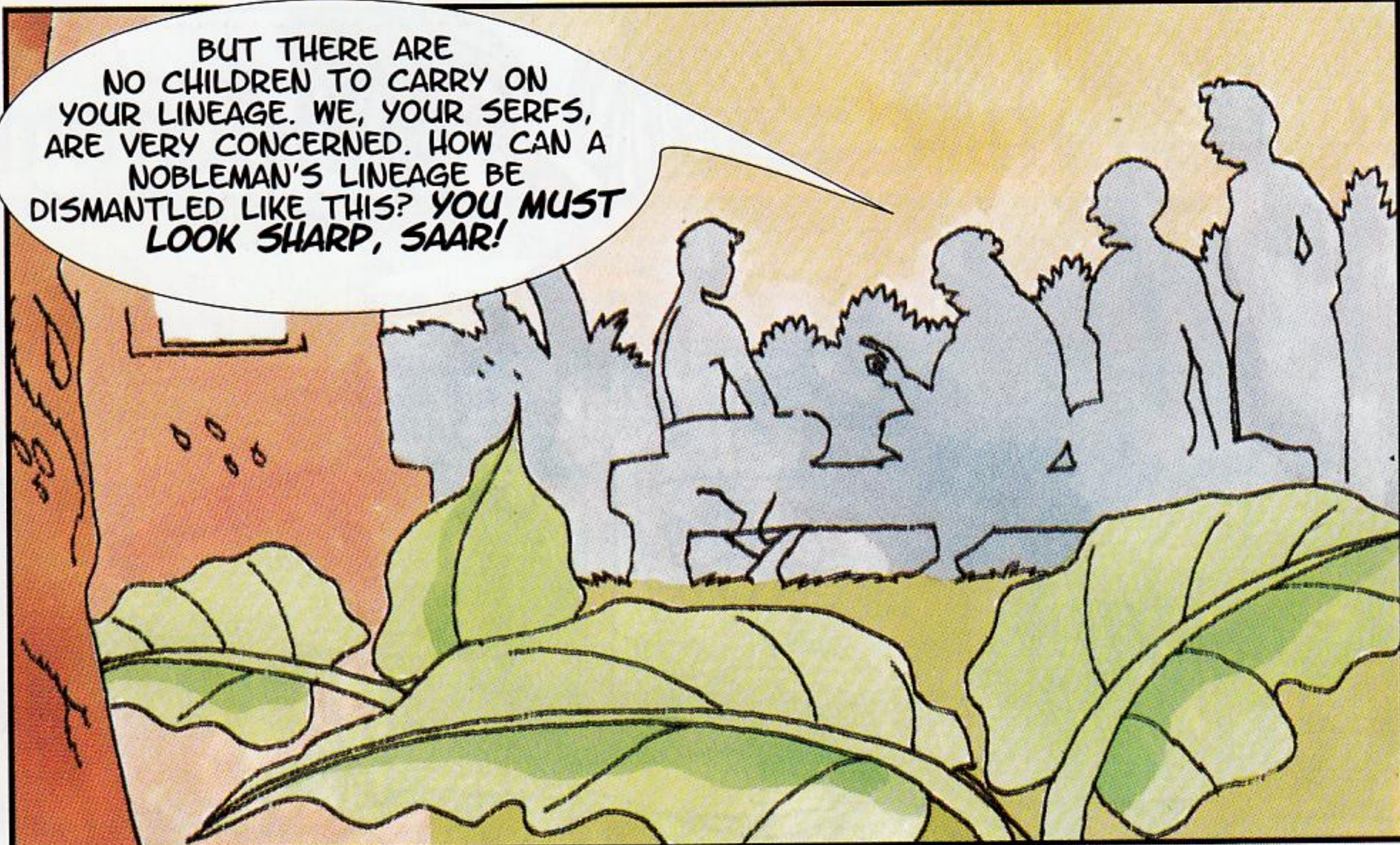








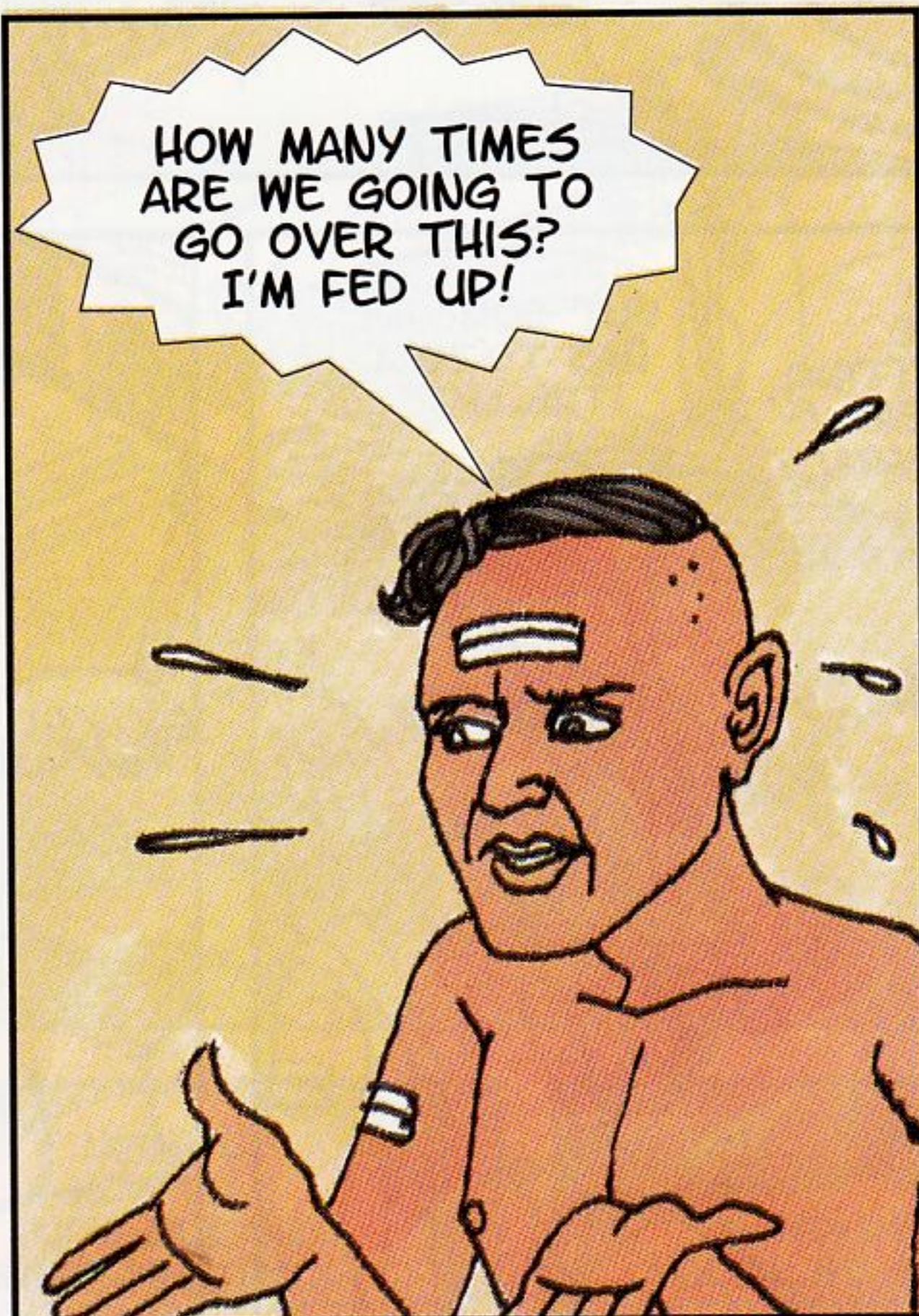
YOU SEE, ER...THIS ...ER CAN'T GO ON. YOU'VE BEEN MARRIED TO LAKSHMIKUTTY KOCHAMMA FOR TEN OR TWELVE YEARS...



BUT THERE ARE NO CHILDREN TO CARRY ON YOUR LINEAGE. WE, YOUR SERFS, ARE VERY CONCERNED. HOW CAN A NOBLEMAN'S LINEAGE BE DISMANTLED LIKE THIS? YOU MUST LOOK SHARP, SAAR!



SAAR, IF THERE'S A PROBLEM YOU MUST BEGIN SOME RELIGIOUS RITUALS IMMEDIATELY OR MARRY AGAIN MAYBE...ER LAKSHMIKUTTY KOCHAMMA IS...UMM...ER...BARREN!



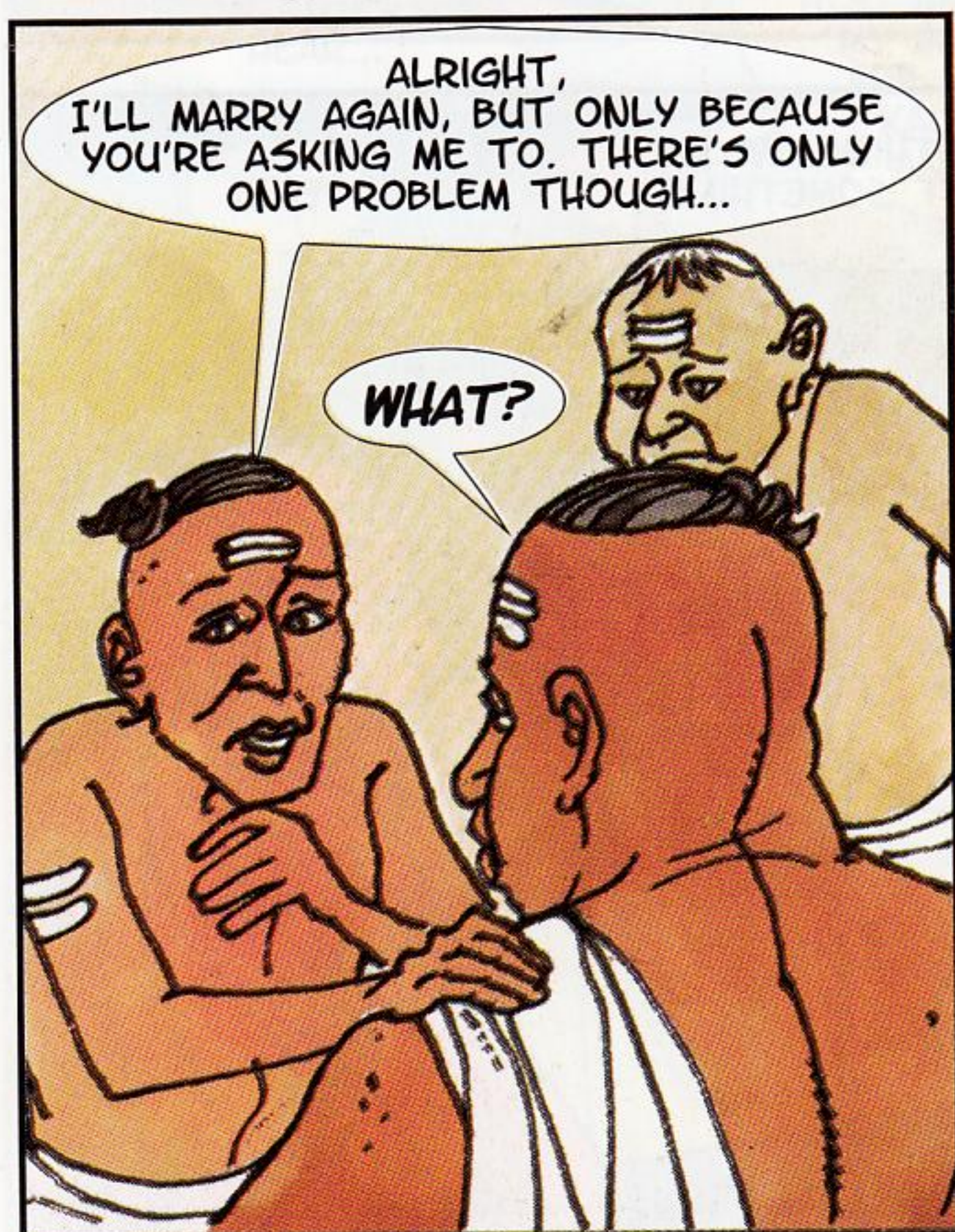
HOW MANY TIMES ARE WE GOING TO GO OVER THIS? I'M FED UP!



BUT SAAR.

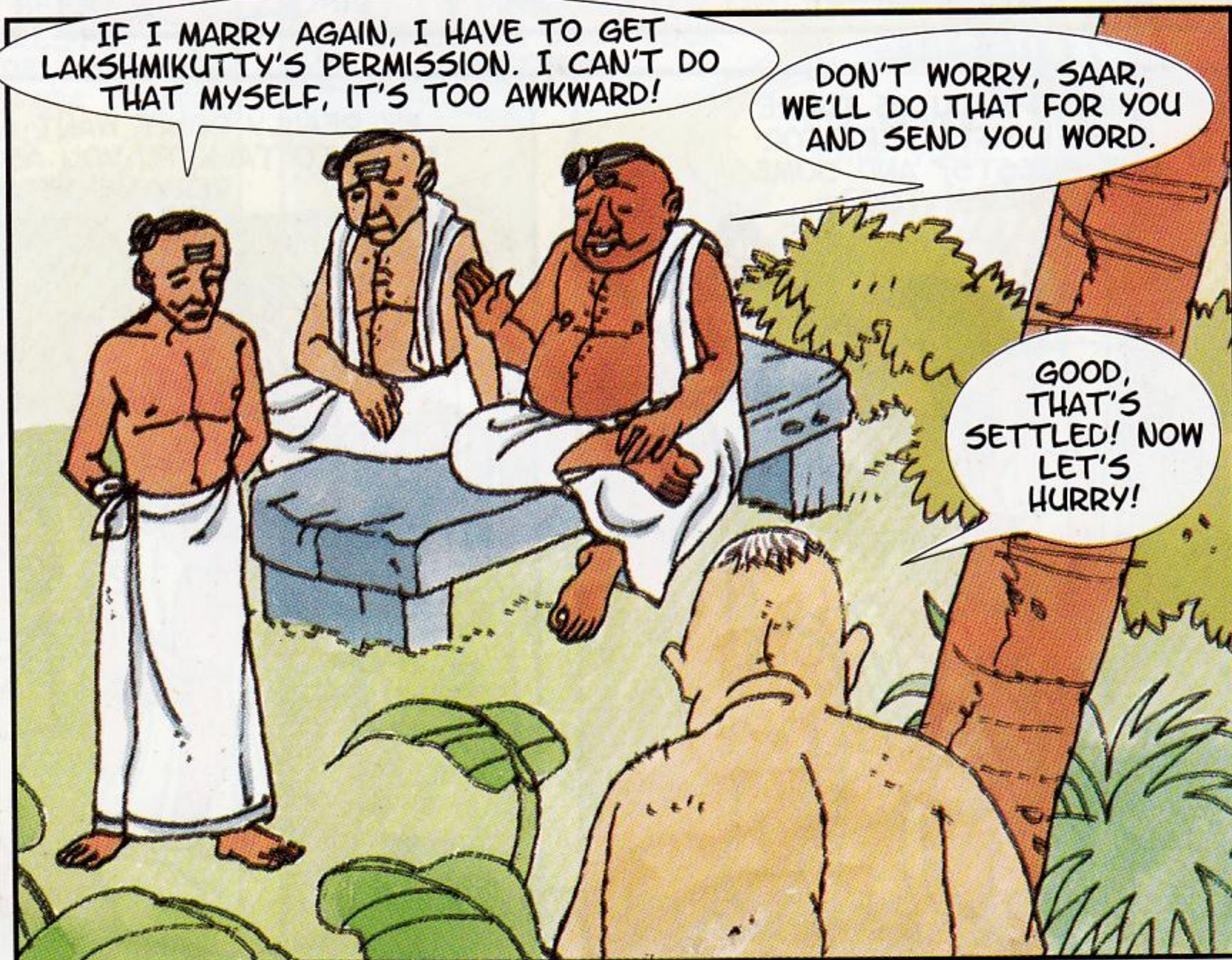
SHHHH! MALU SHOULDN'T HEAR...

cluck! cluck!



ALRIGHT, I'LL MARRY AGAIN, BUT ONLY BECAUSE YOU'RE ASKING ME TO. THERE'S ONLY ONE PROBLEM THOUGH...

WHAT?

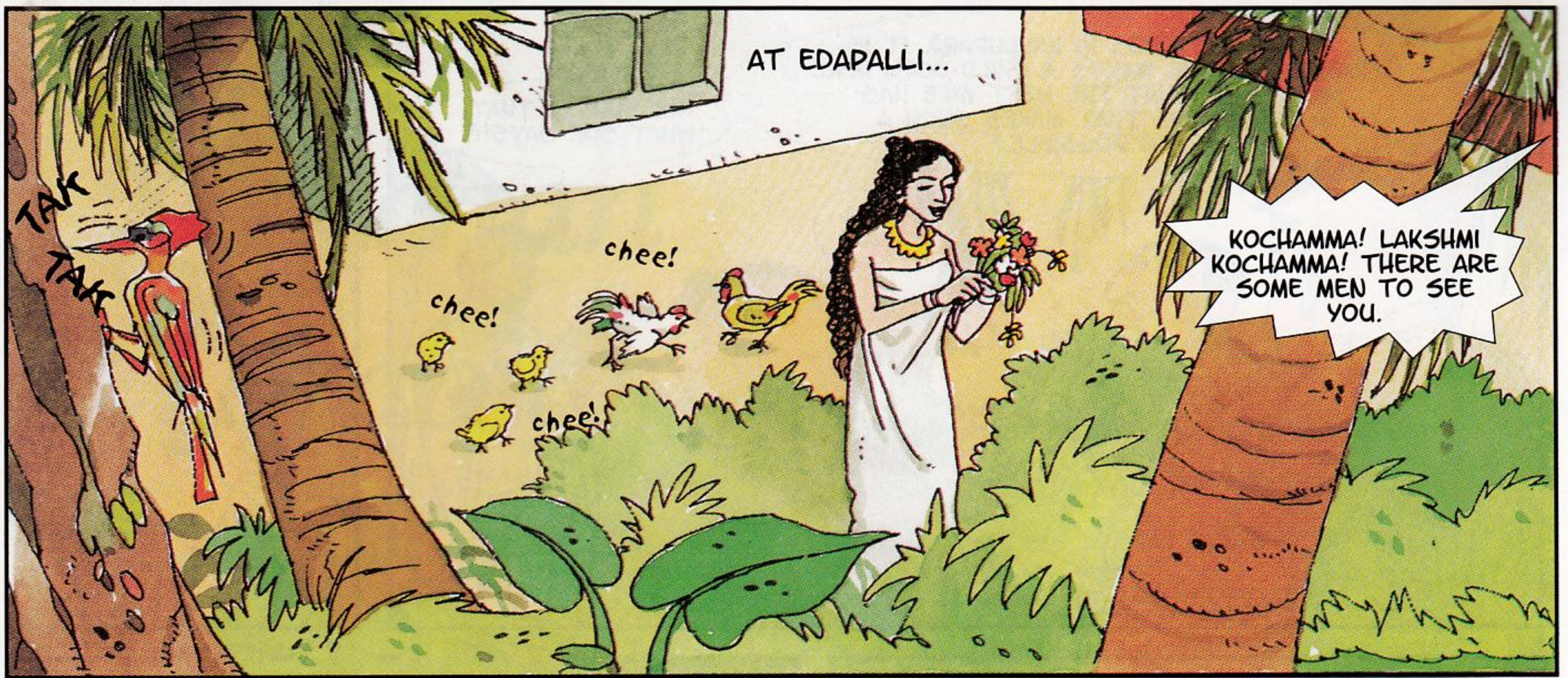


IF I MARRY AGAIN, I HAVE TO GET LAKSHMIKUTTY'S PERMISSION. I CAN'T DO THAT MYSELF, IT'S TOO AWKWARD!

DON'T WORRY, SAAR, WE'LL DO THAT FOR YOU AND SEND YOU WORD.

GOOD, THAT'S SETTLED! NOW LET'S HURRY!



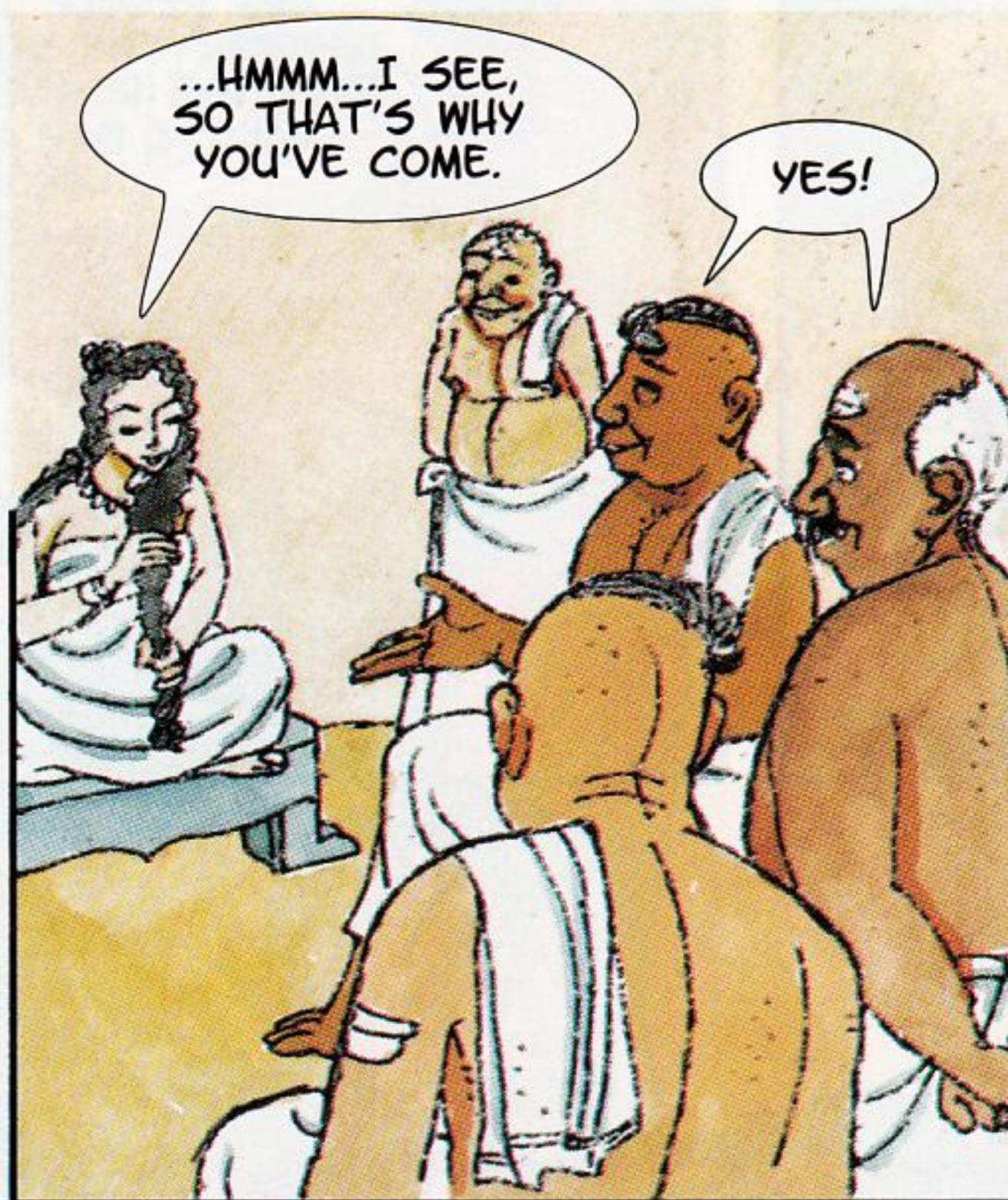


AT EDAPALLI...

KOCHAMMA! LAKSHMI  
KOCHAMMA! THERE ARE  
SOME MEN TO SEE  
YOU.



TELL THEM I'M  
COMING.

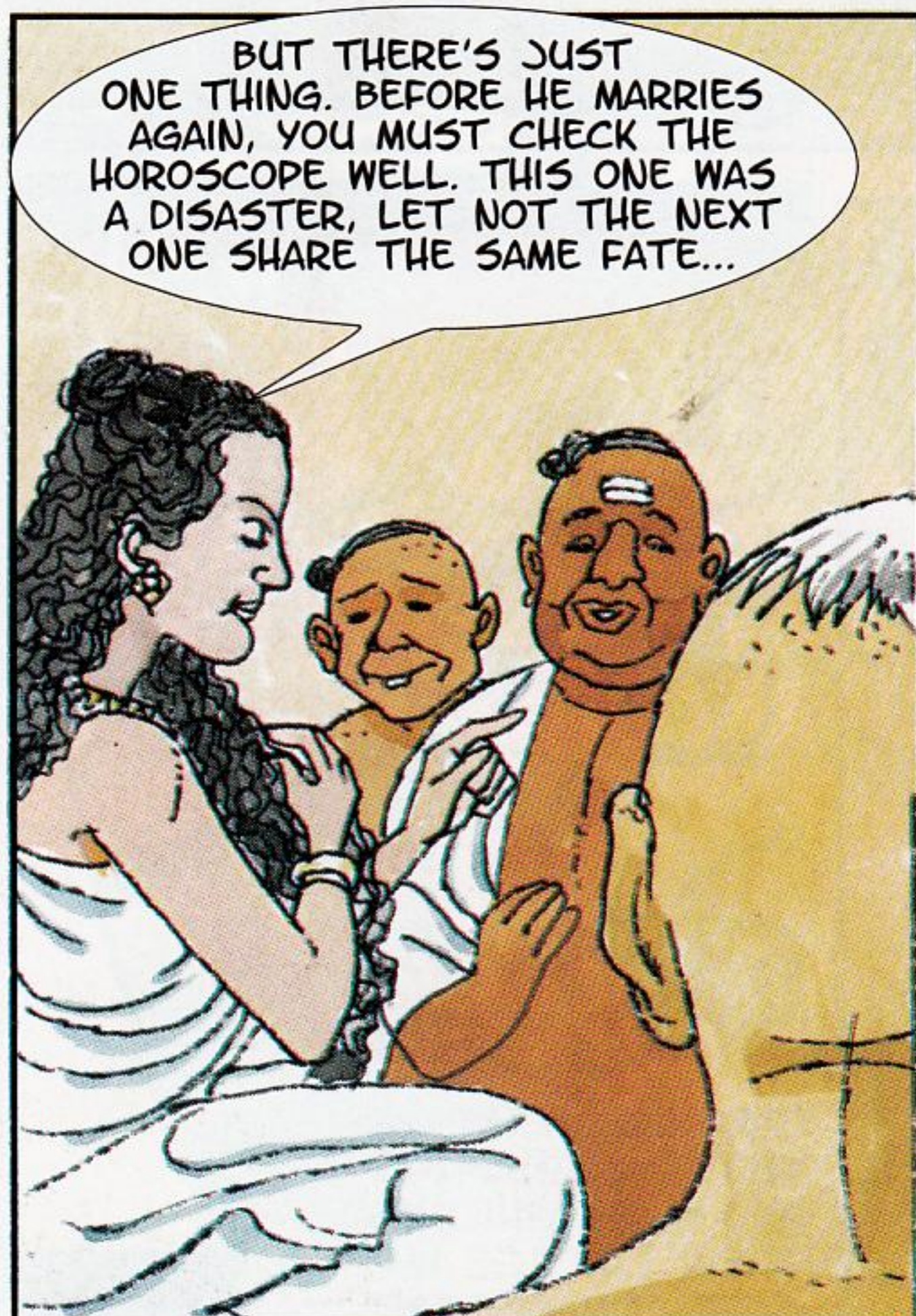


...HMMM...I SEE,  
SO THAT'S WHY  
YOU'VE COME.

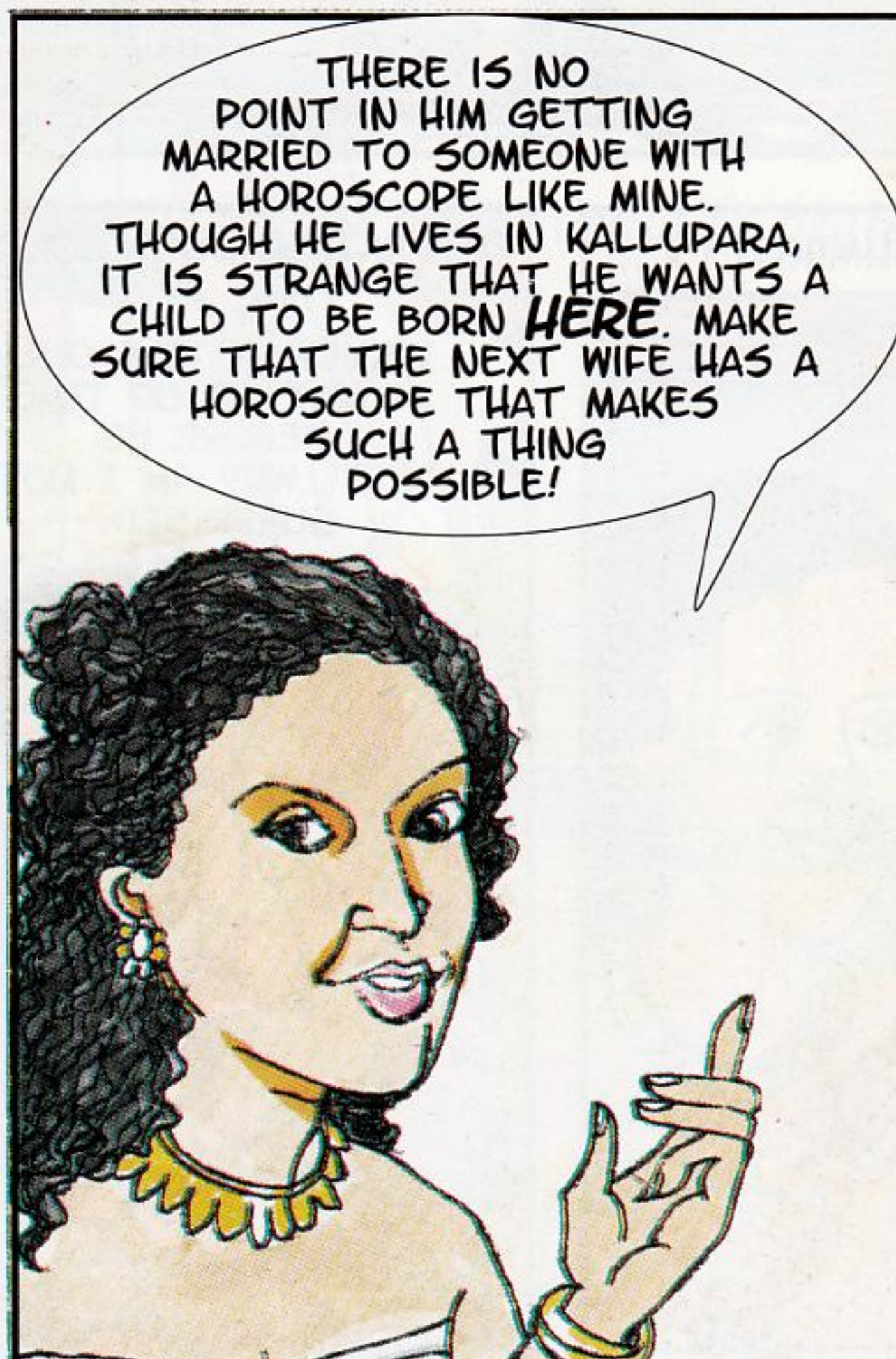
YES!



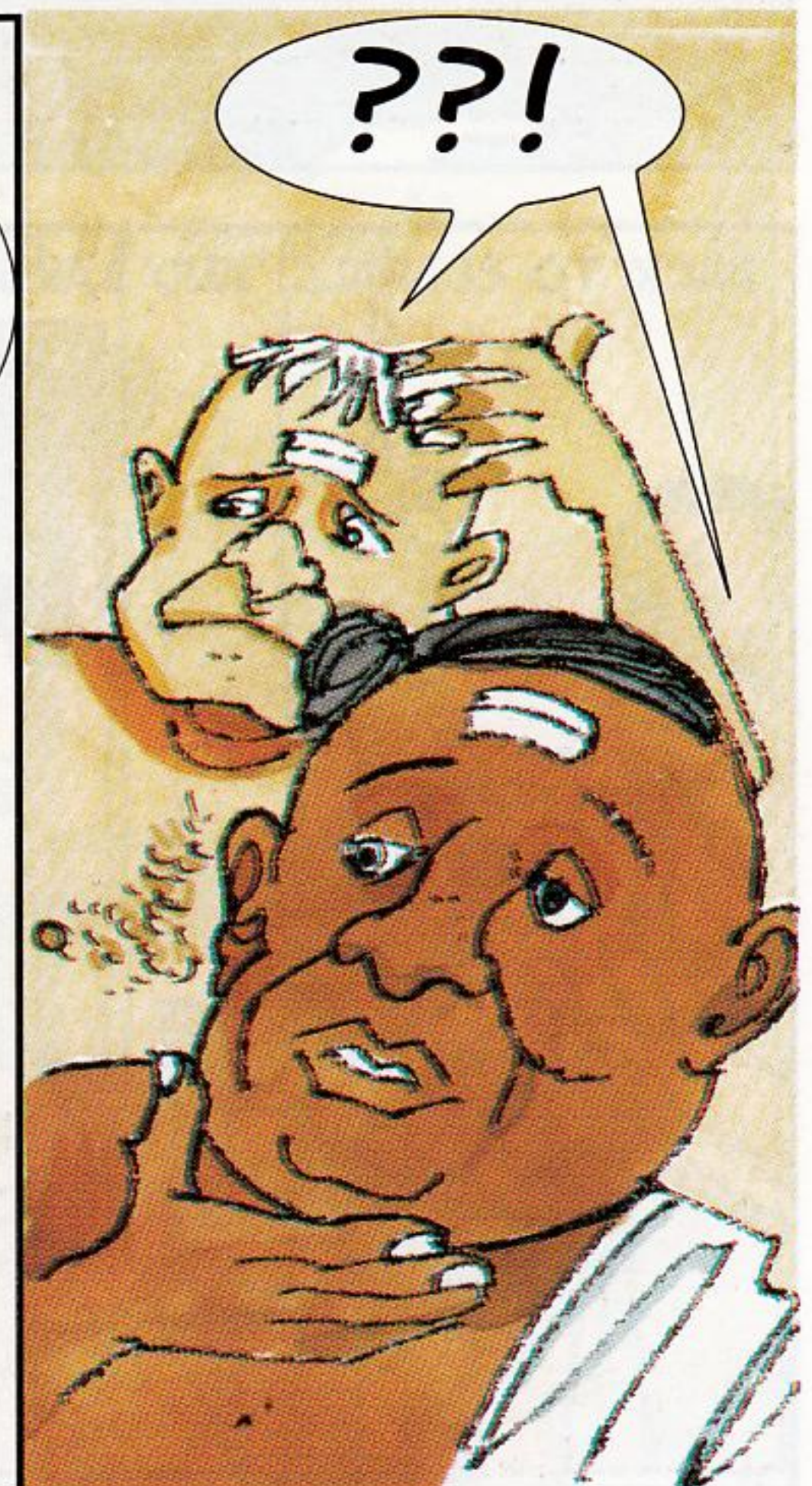
YES, THIS FAMILY  
**MUST** HAVE AN ISSUE, THAT IS  
CERTAIN. THERE IS NOTHING THAT I  
DESIRE MORE. SO, I HAVE NO  
OBJECTIONS TO HIS GETTING  
MARRIED A SECOND TIME.



BUT THERE'S JUST  
ONE THING. BEFORE HE MARRIES  
AGAIN, YOU MUST CHECK THE  
HOROSCOPE WELL. THIS ONE WAS  
A DISASTER, LET NOT THE NEXT  
ONE SHARE THE SAME FATE...

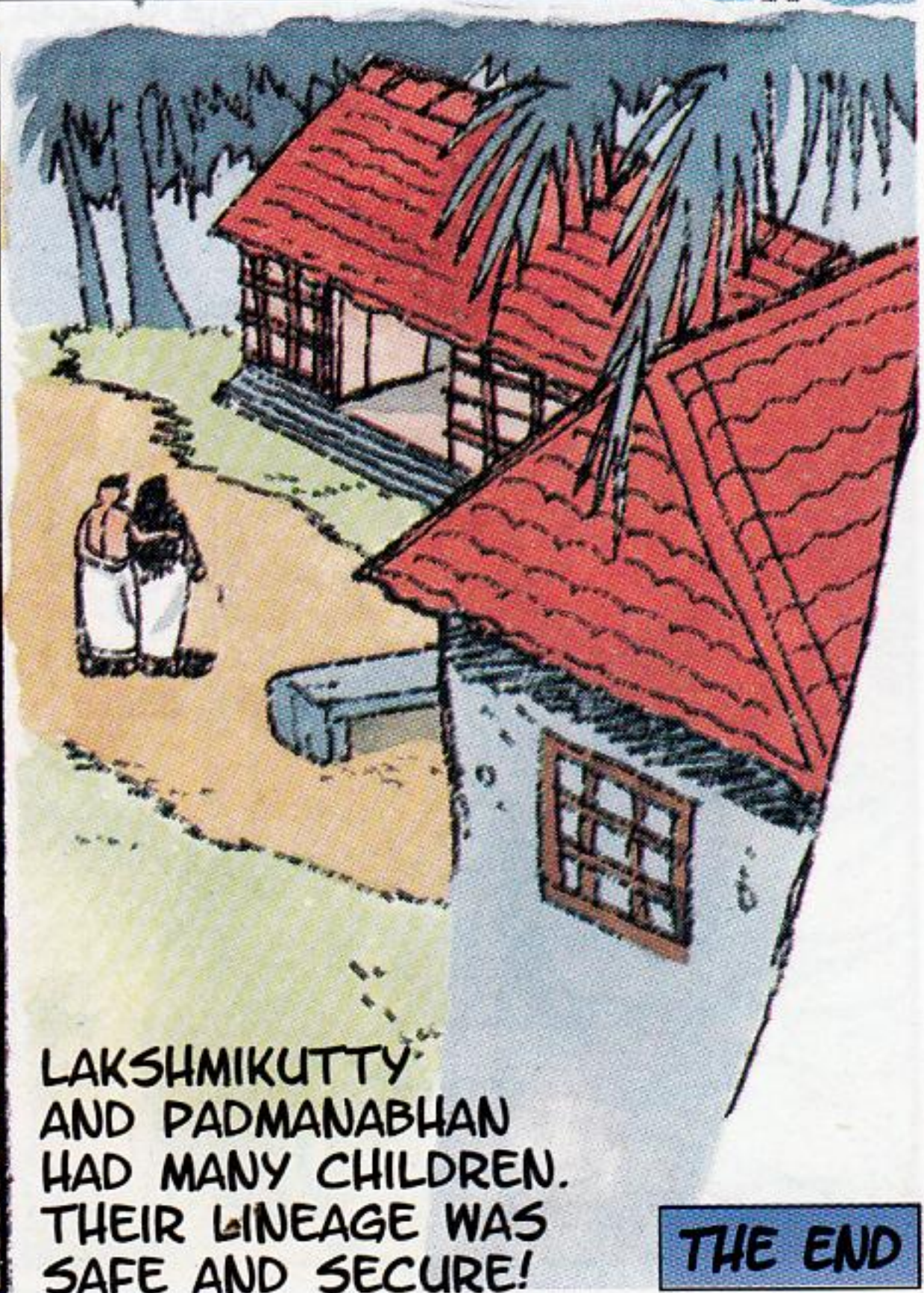
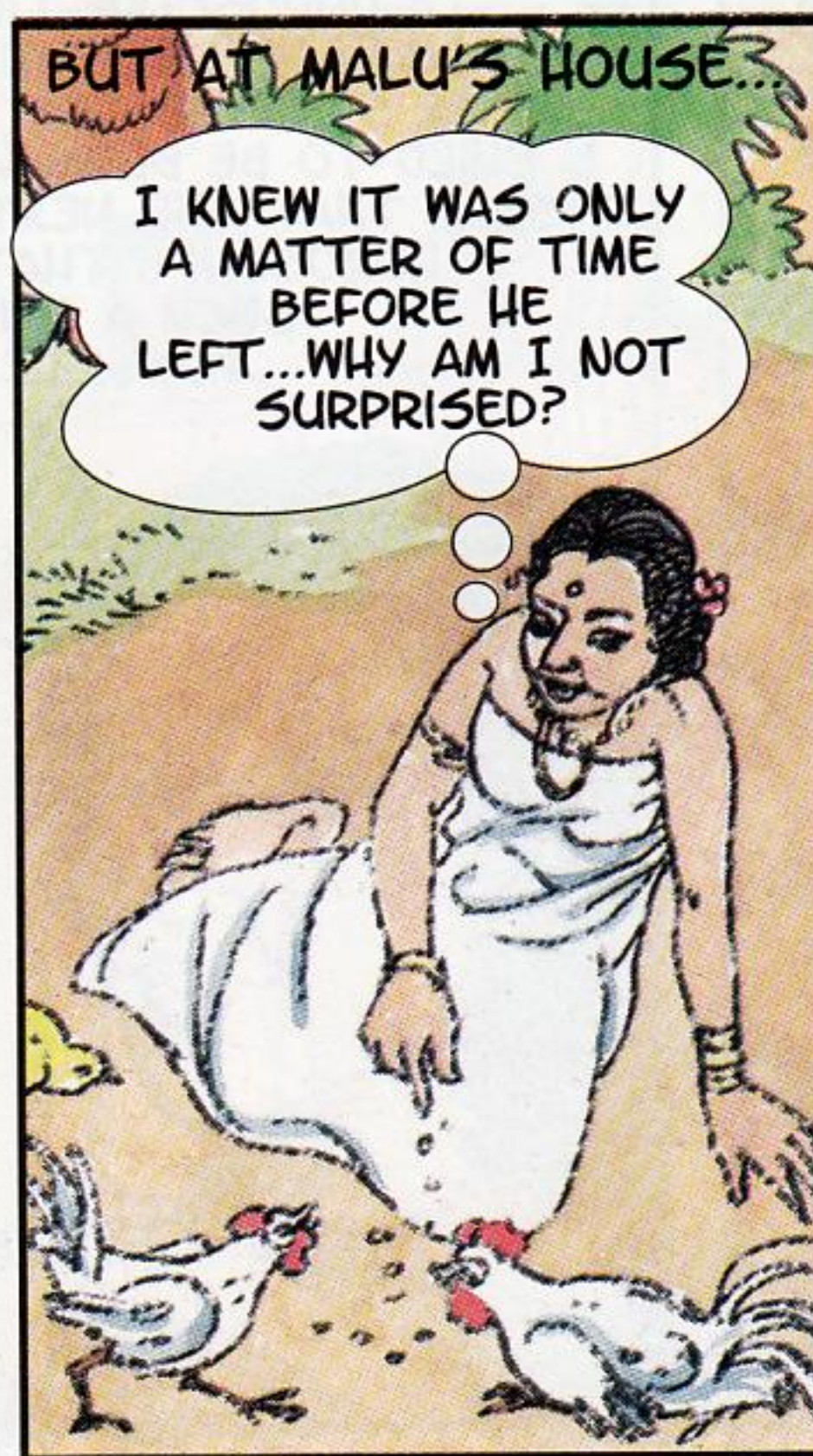
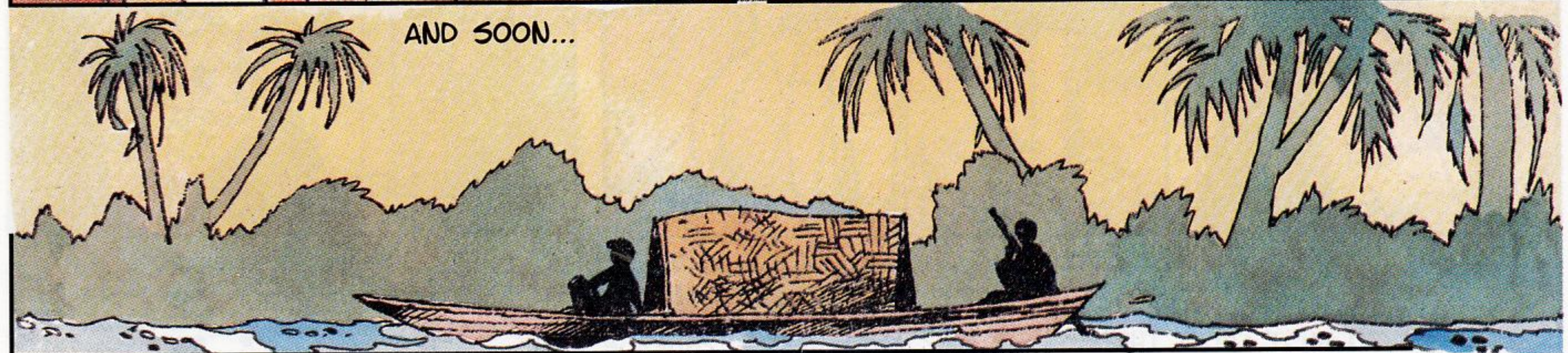
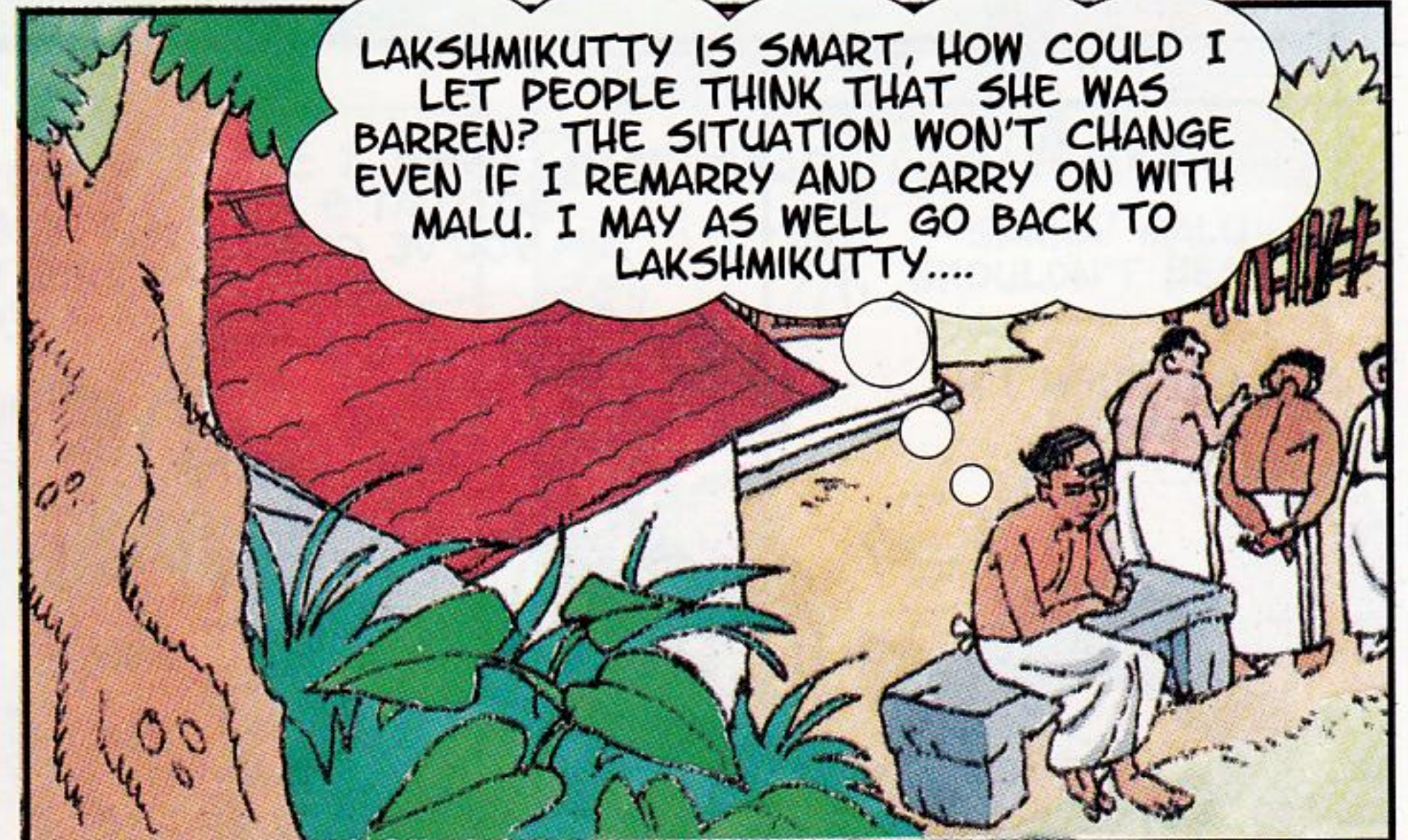
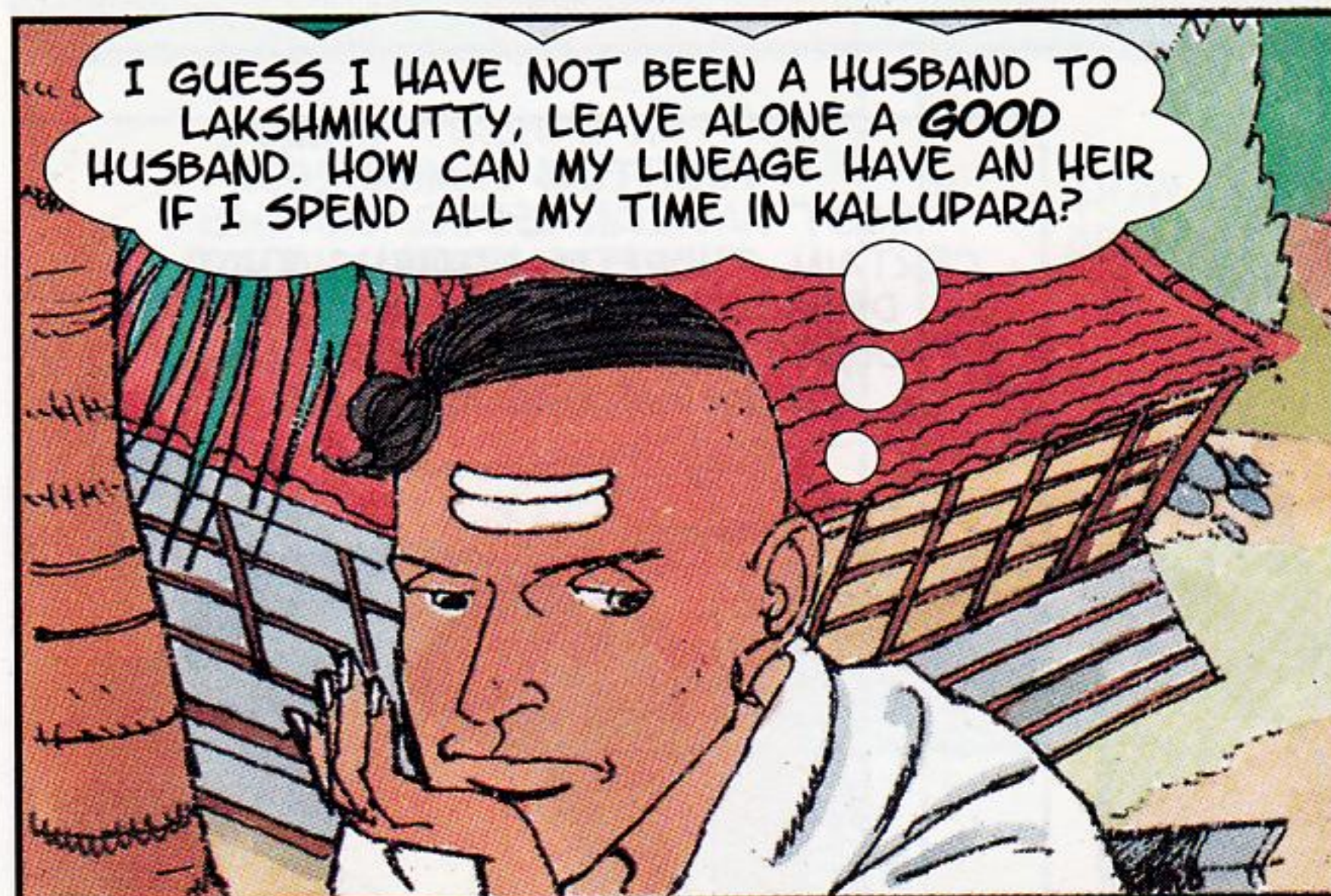
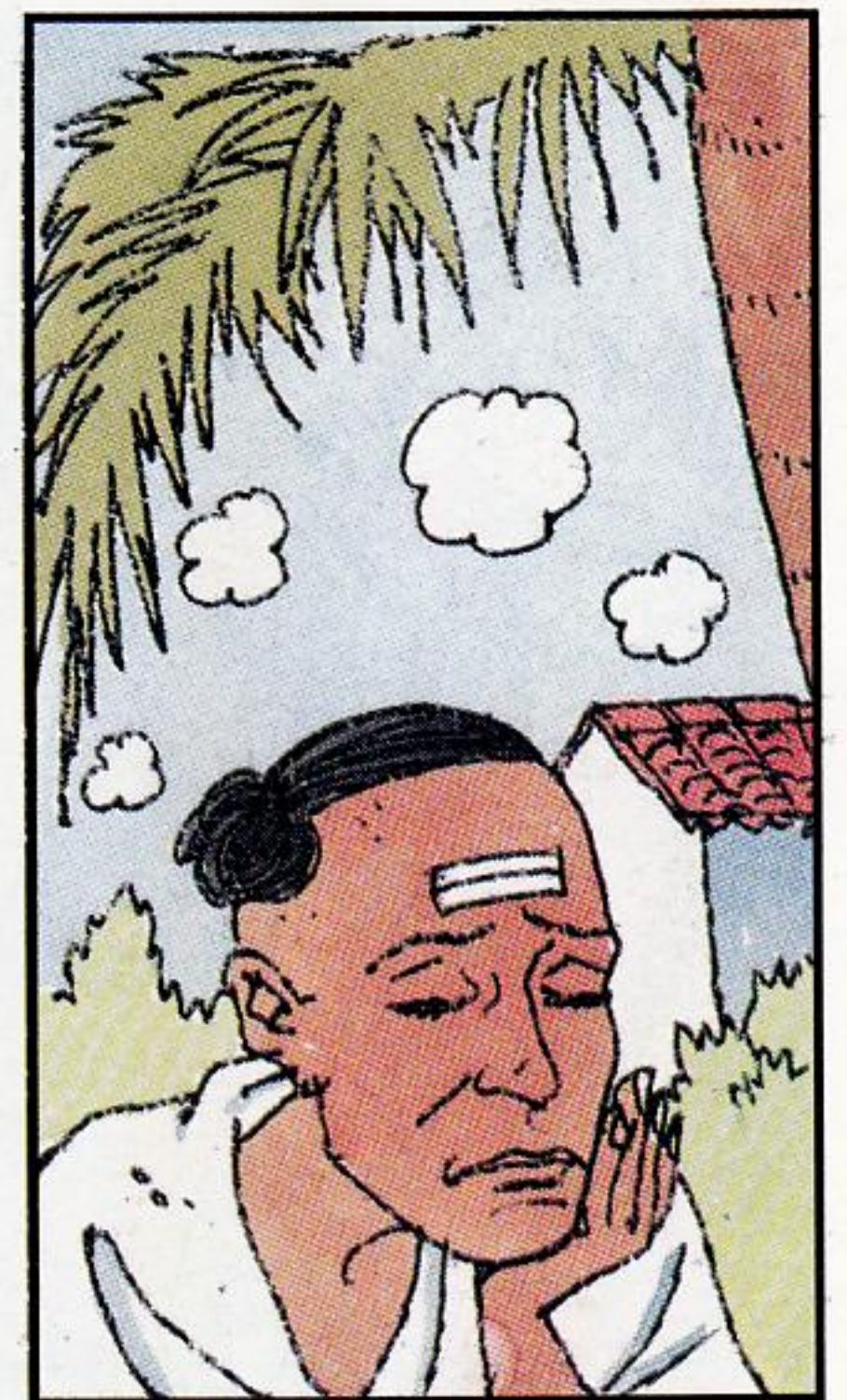
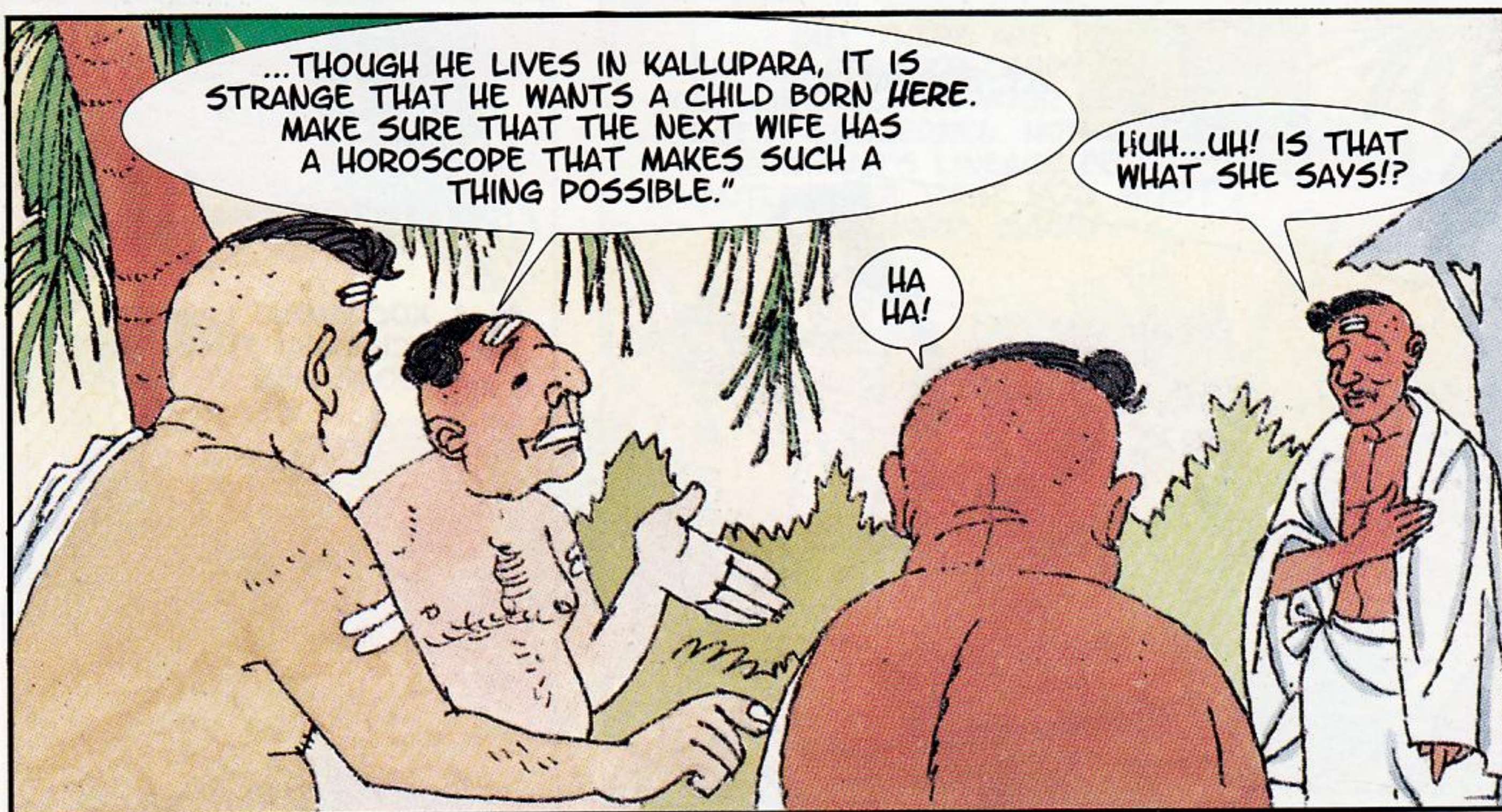


THERE IS NO  
POINT IN HIM GETTING  
MARRIED TO SOMEONE WITH  
A HOROSCOPE LIKE MINE.  
THOUGH HE LIVES IN KALLUPARA,  
IT IS STRANGE THAT HE WANTS A  
CHILD TO BE BORN **HERE**. MAKE  
SURE THAT THE NEXT WIFE HAS A  
HOROSCOPE THAT MAKES  
SUCH A THING  
POSSIBLE!



??!



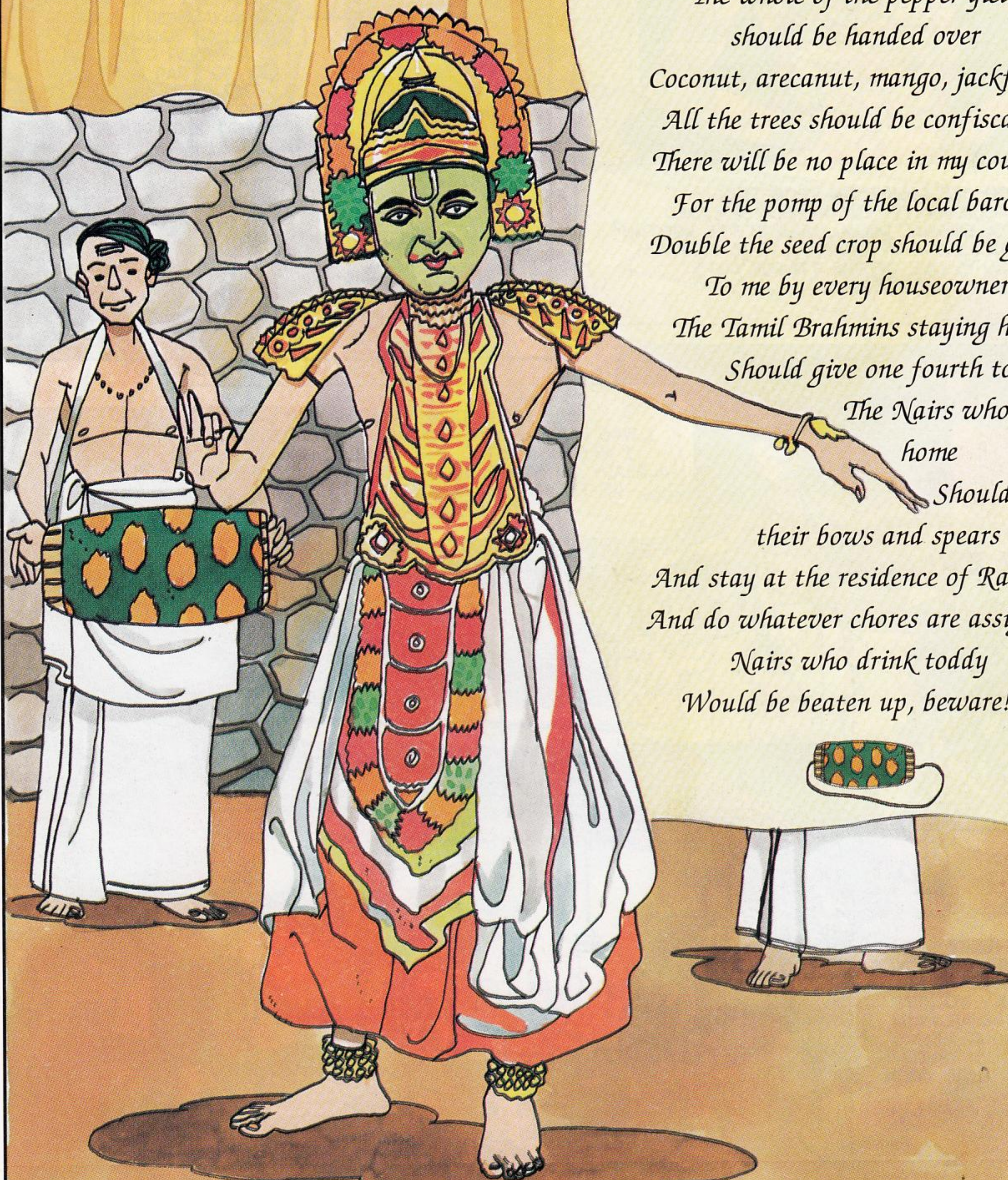


THE END



# Kunchan Nambiar

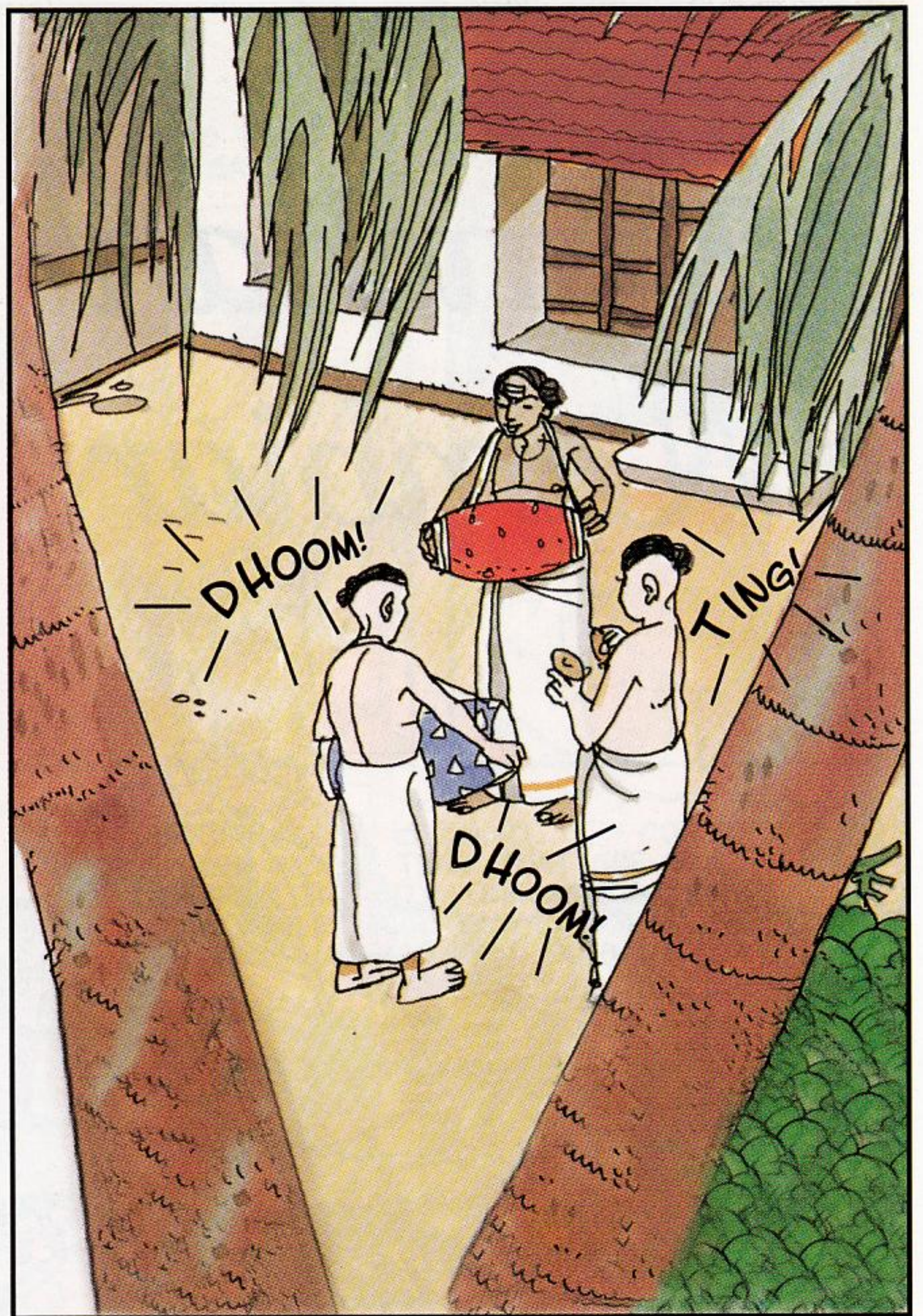
*"Everybody should owe allegiance to him  
Tributes must be paid from time to time  
Half the yield should be given to me  
The whole of the pepper yield  
should be handed over  
Coconut, arecanut, mango, jackfruit:  
All the trees should be confiscated  
There will be no place in my country  
For the pomp of the local barons  
Double the seed crop should be given  
To me by every houseowner  
The Tamil Brahmins staying here  
Should give one fourth to me  
The Nairs who stay at  
home  
Should take  
their bows and spears  
And stay at the residence of Ravana  
And do whatever chores are assigned.  
Nairs who drink toddy  
Would be beaten up, beware!<sup>1</sup>"*





HELLO!  
I'M KUNCHAN  
NAMBIAR.  
I WAS BORN  
IN A SMALL  
TOWN IN KERALA  
ABOUT THREE  
CENTURIES AGO.  
I'M SUPPOSED  
TO BE A FAMOUS  
MAN. WHY, YOU  
MAY ASK. LET  
ME TELL  
YOU MY  
VERSION.

YOU SEE FOLKS, I'M FROM THE  
NAMBIAR COMMUNITY. THE NAMBIARS PLAYED  
THE MIZHAVU, A SPECIAL DRUM, USED IN THE KOOOTHU<sup>2</sup>  
PERFORMANCES OF THE CHAKIARS. THE CHAKIAR  
KOOOTHU IS ONE OF THE TEMPLE ARTS  
OF KERALA.



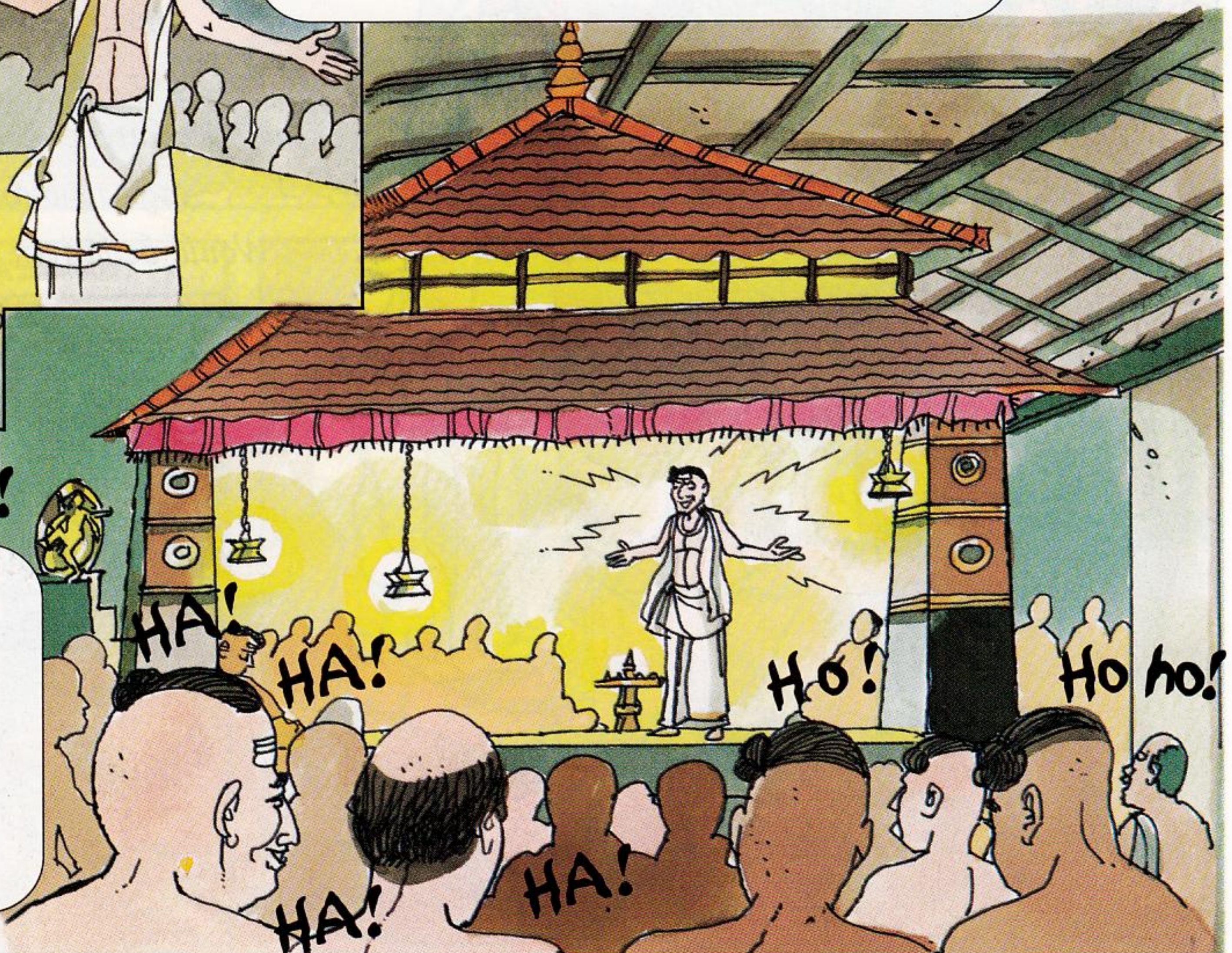
ONE PARTICULAR EVENING, AS  
I WAS PLAYING THE MIZHAVU, I FELL ASLEEP.  
I WAS EXHAUSTED. THE CHAKIAR WHO WAS  
ALREADY ON STAGE BEGAN TO MAKE FUN OF ME.  
HE TEASED ME, ALMOST TO THE POINT  
OF INSULTING ME.

ZZZZZZZZ!

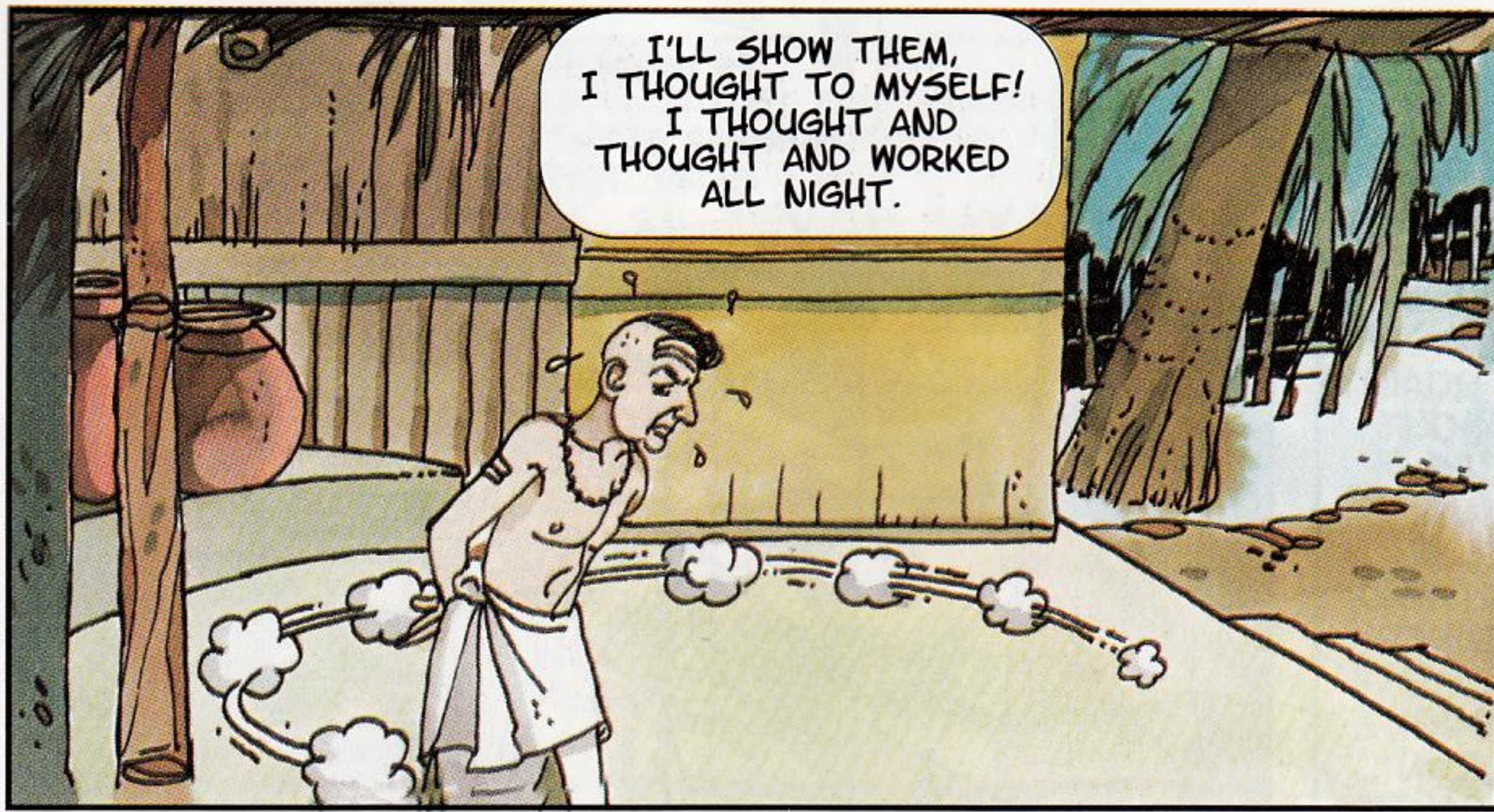


HA!  
HA! HA!

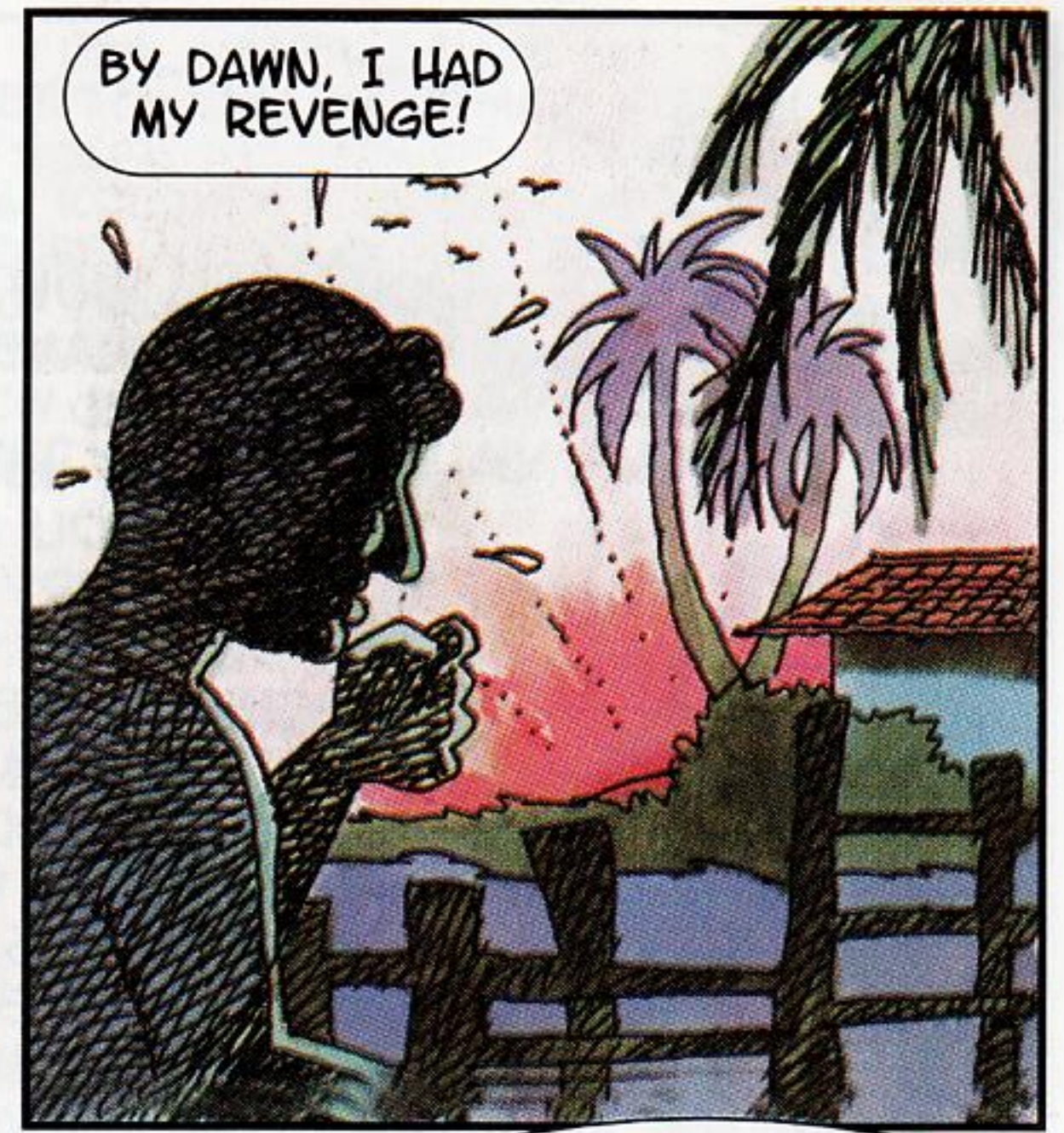
THE AUDIENCE  
LAUGHED SO MUCH  
THAT I WOKE UP  
STARTLED, ONLY TO HEAR  
WHAT THE CHAKIAR WAS  
SAYING ABOUT ME.  
I WAS FURIOUS! WHAT  
WAS THERE TO MAKE SUCH  
A FUSS ABOUT?  
I FELL ASLEEP,  
THAT'S ALL!





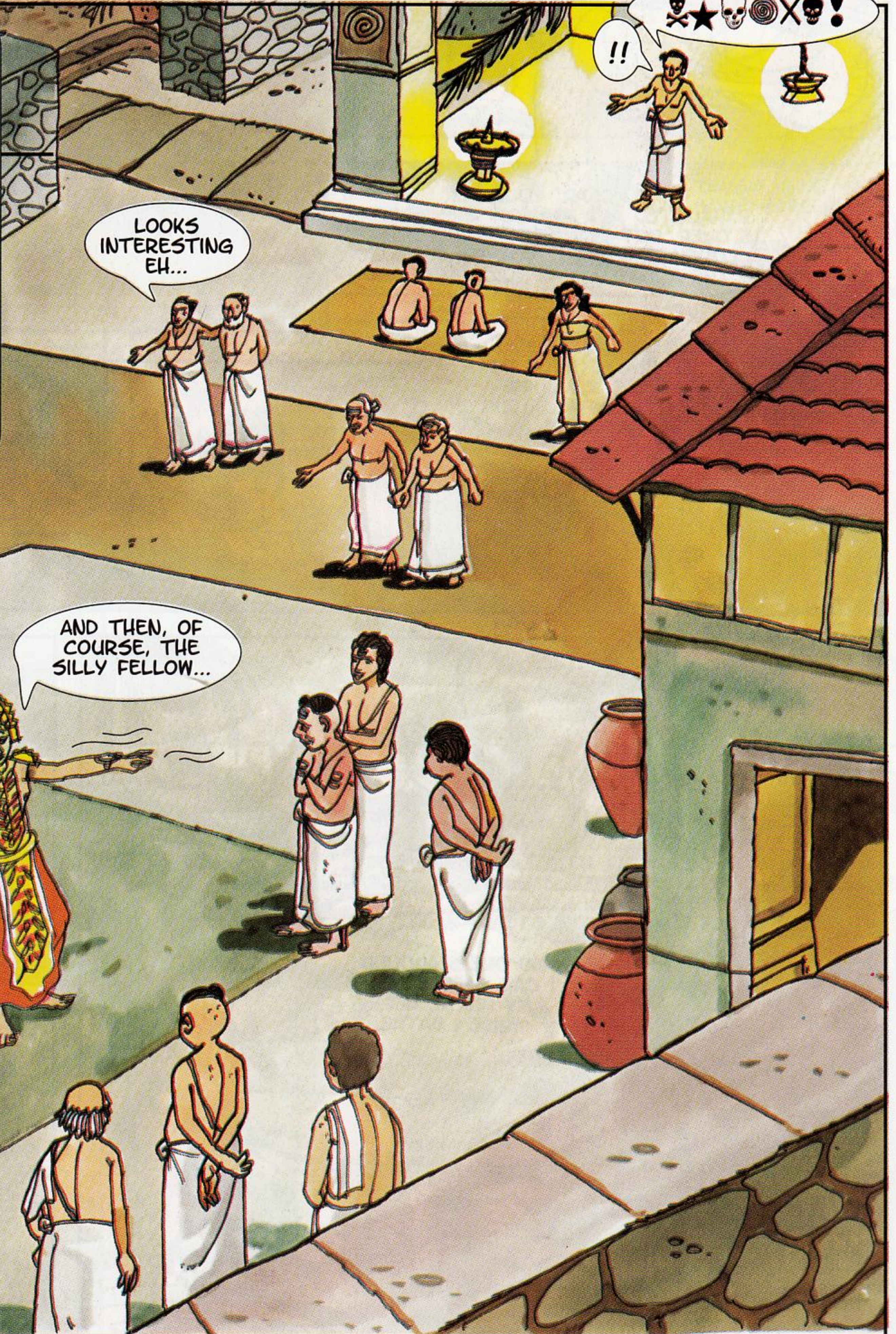


I'LL SHOW THEM,  
I THOUGHT TO MYSELF!  
I THOUGHT AND  
THOUGHT AND WORKED  
ALL NIGHT.



BY DAWN, I HAD  
MY REVENGE!

THE NEXT EVENING,  
WHILE THE CHAKIAR'S  
PERFORMANCE WAS ON, I  
BEGAN TO PERFORM IN  
ANOTHER PART OF THE  
TEMPLE GROUNDS. AND LO  
AND BEHOLD, THE CROWD  
STARTED MOVING TOWARDS  
ME. THEY BEGAN LAUGHING  
AND CLAPPING. I LOVED IT!  
SOON, THE CHAKIAR WAS  
PERFORMING FOR NO ONE  
BUT HIMSELF! HA! HA!  
WHAT I INVENTED THAT  
EVENING CAME TO BE KNOWN  
AS **OTTAM THULLAL**. AND  
THAT'S HOW I BECAME  
FAMOUS. PEOPLE SAY THAT  
I'M A GENIUS. WELL...I'LL  
LEAVE THAT TO YOU  
TO JUDGE.

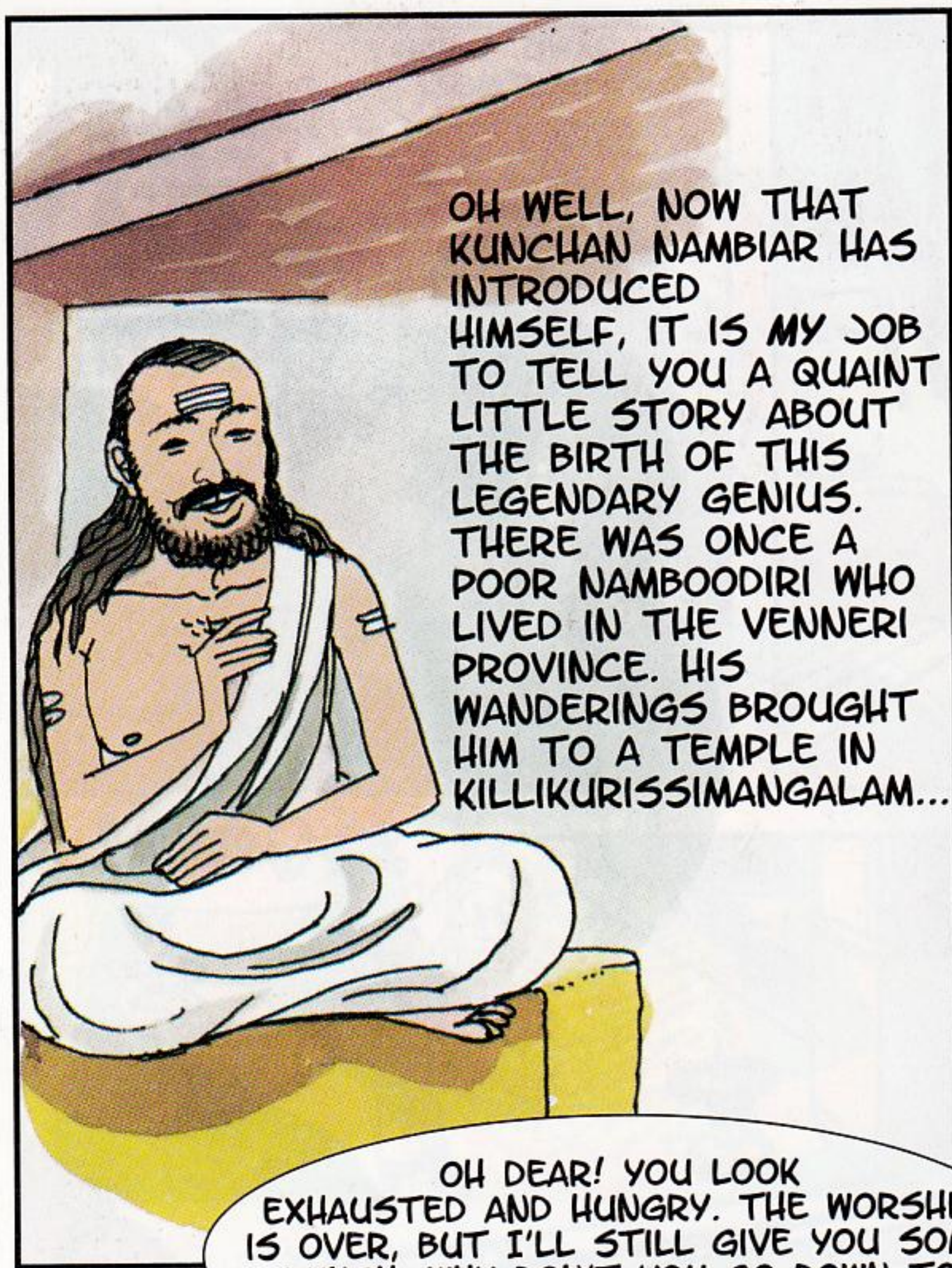


LOOKS  
INTERESTING  
EH...

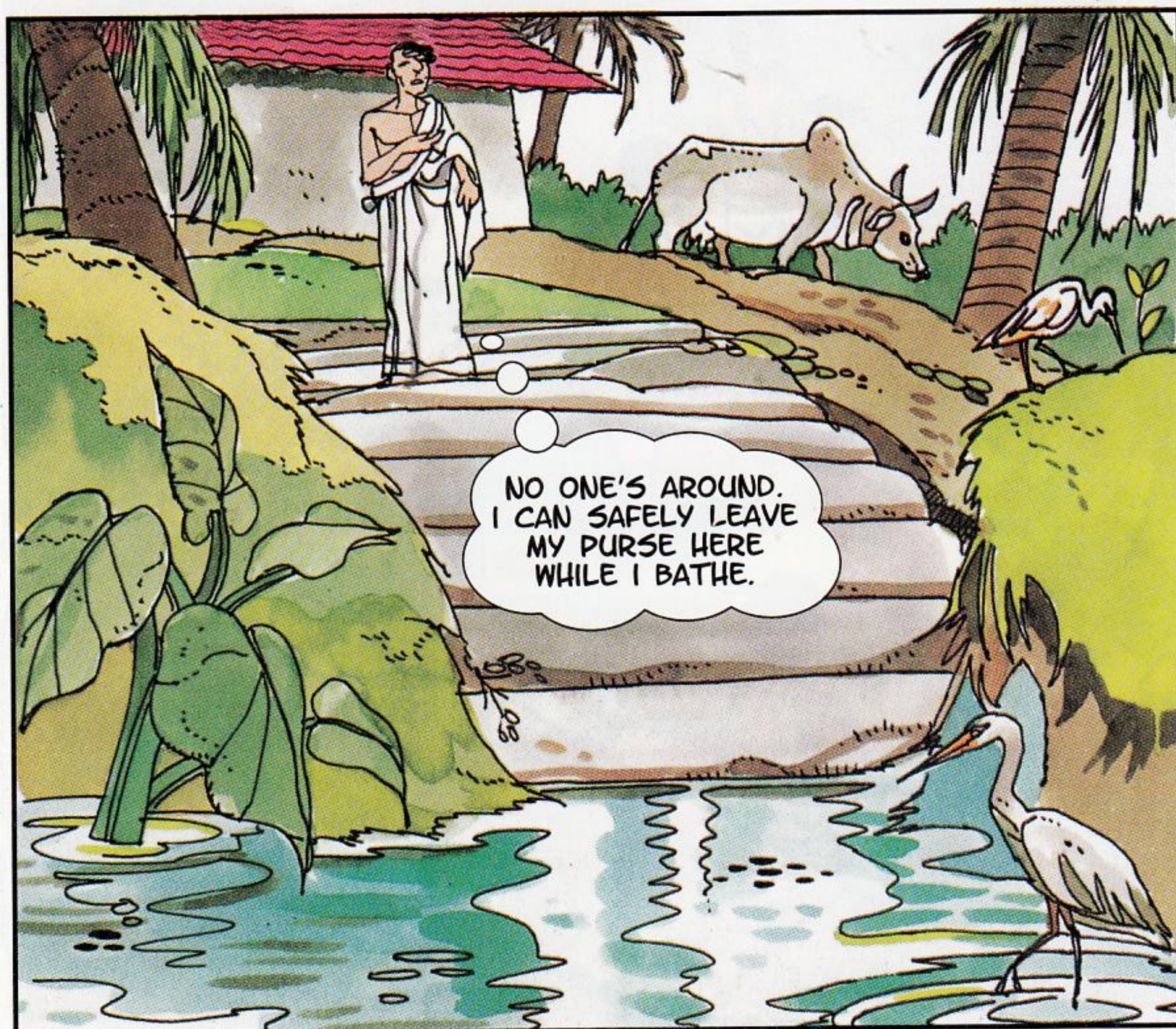
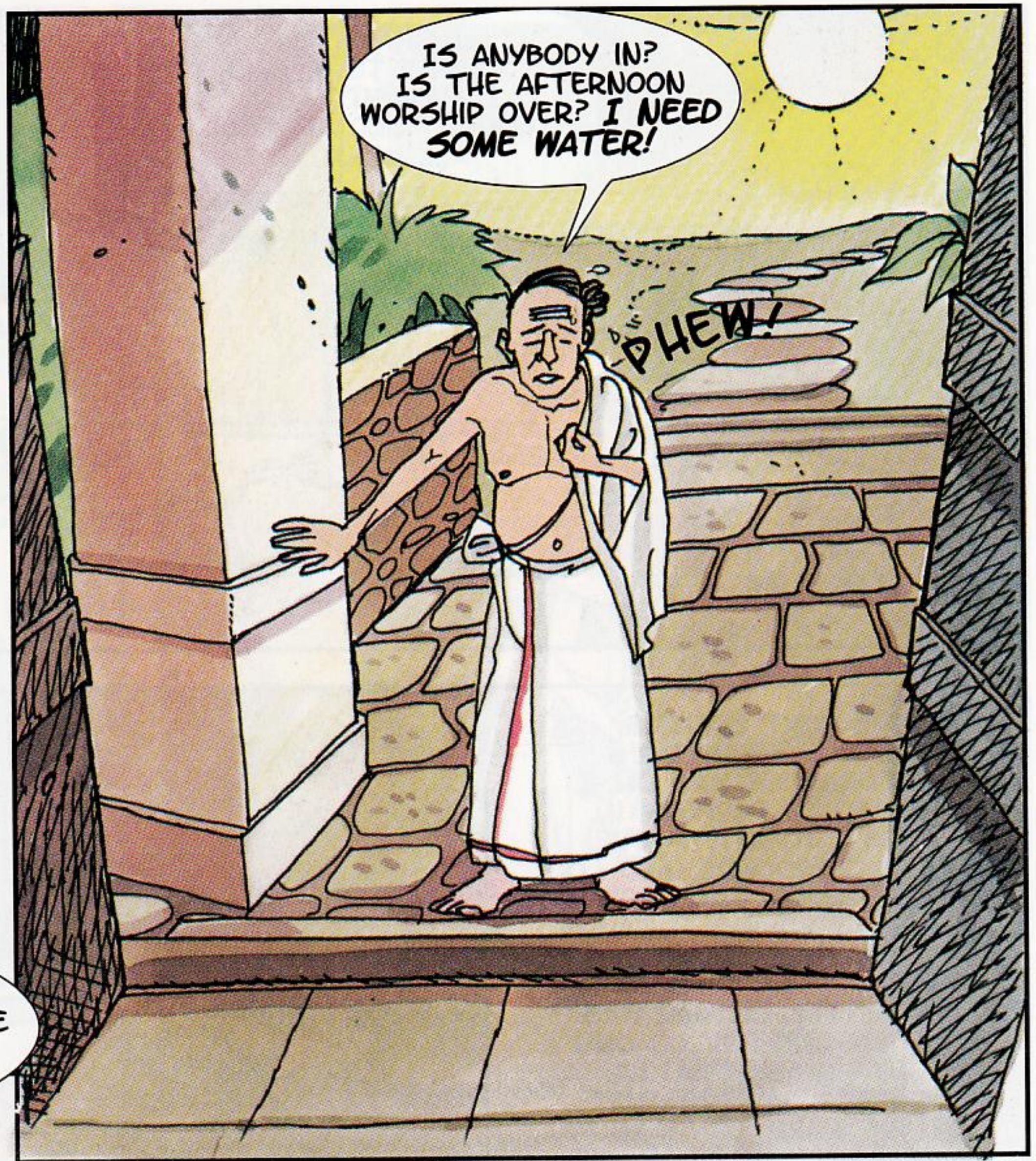
AND THEN, OF  
COURSE, THE  
SILLY FELLOW...

?!

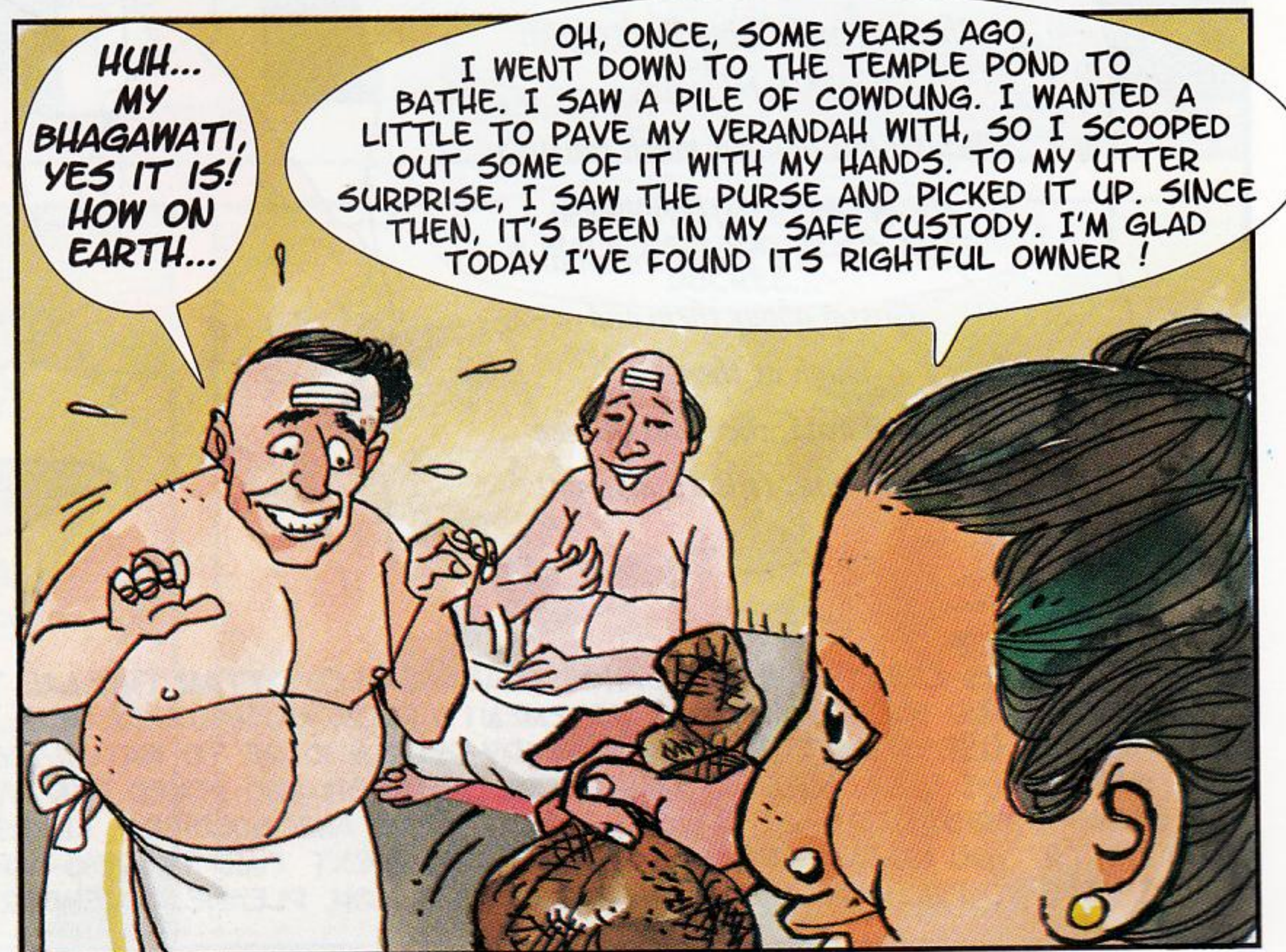
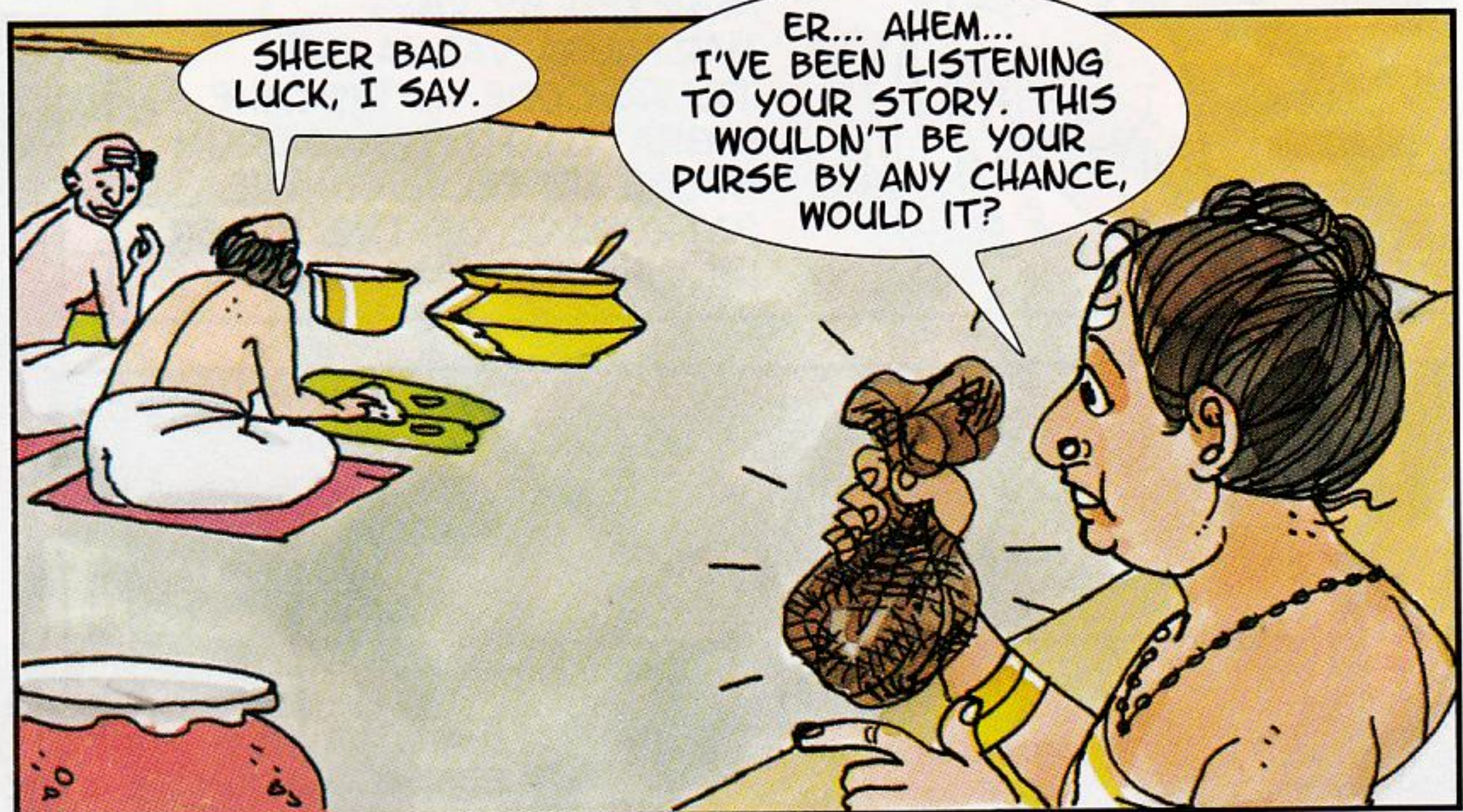
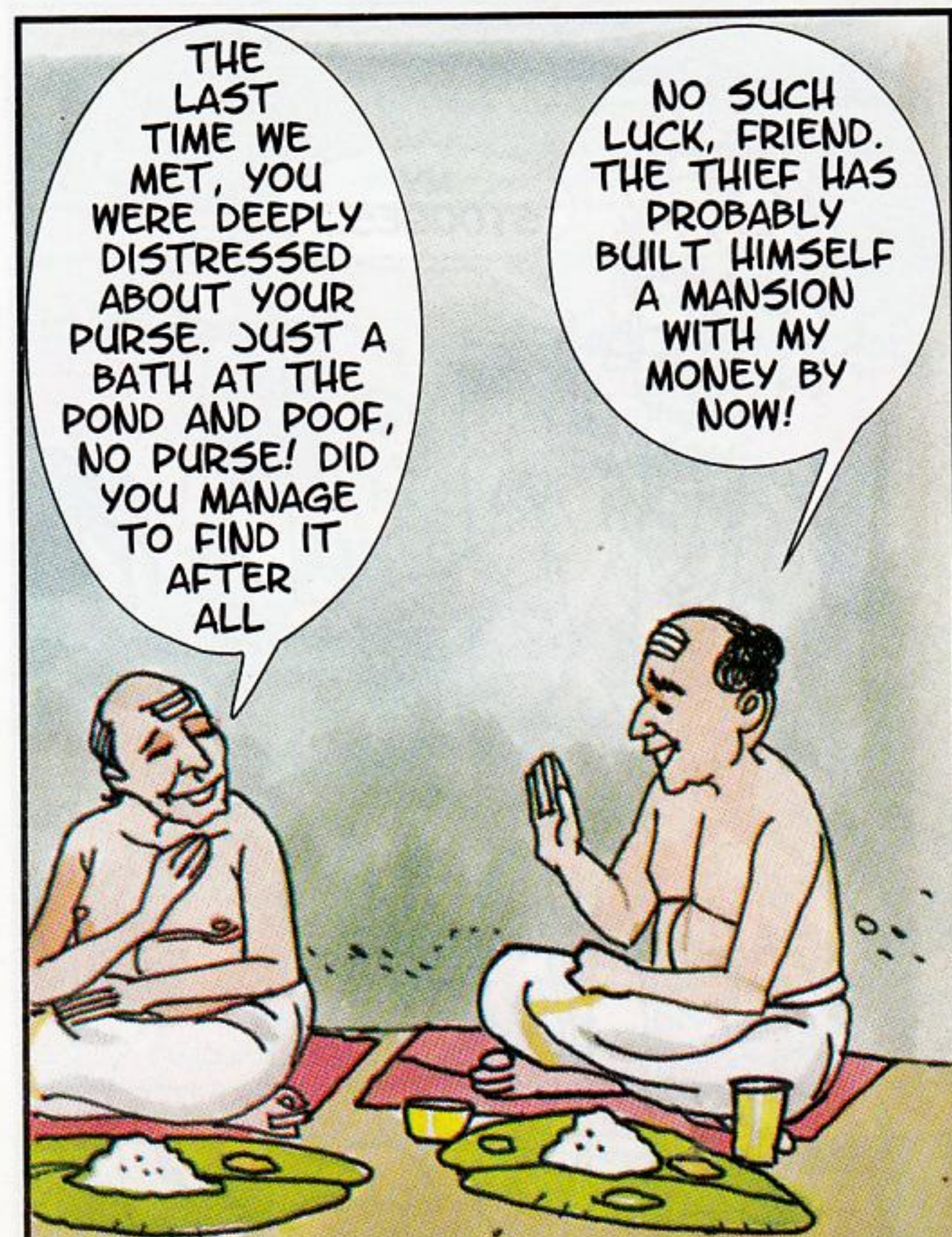
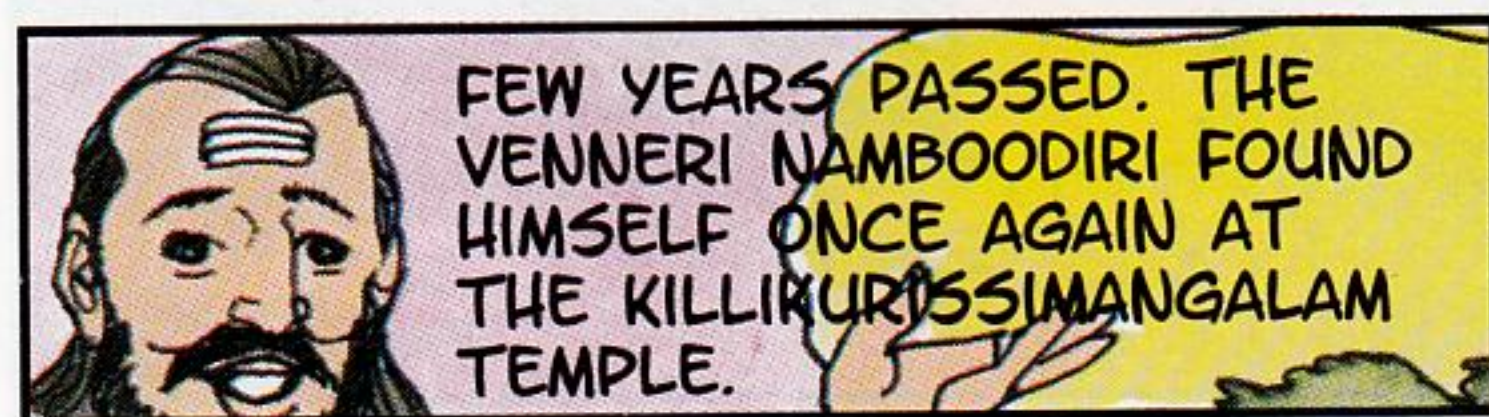
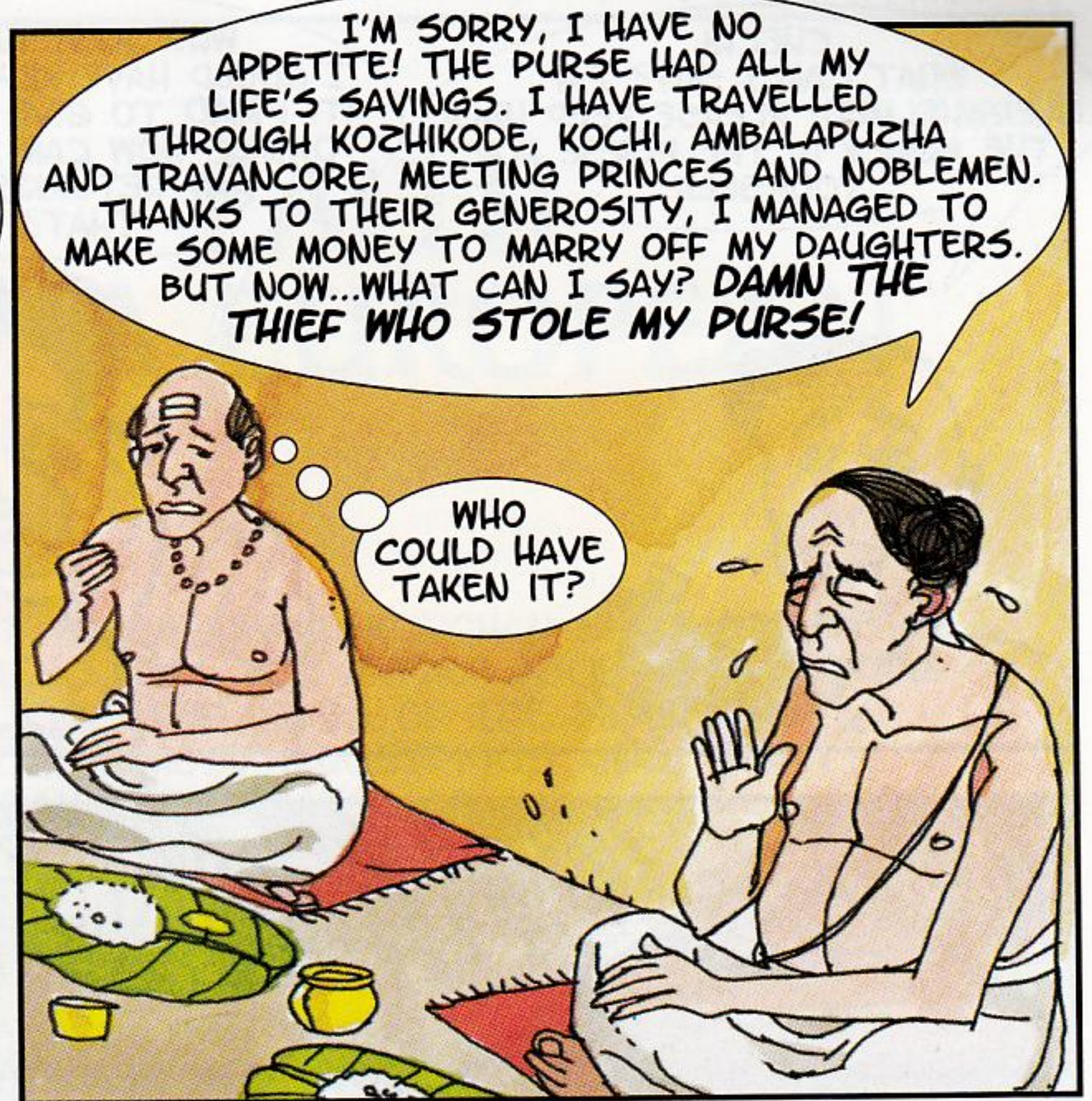
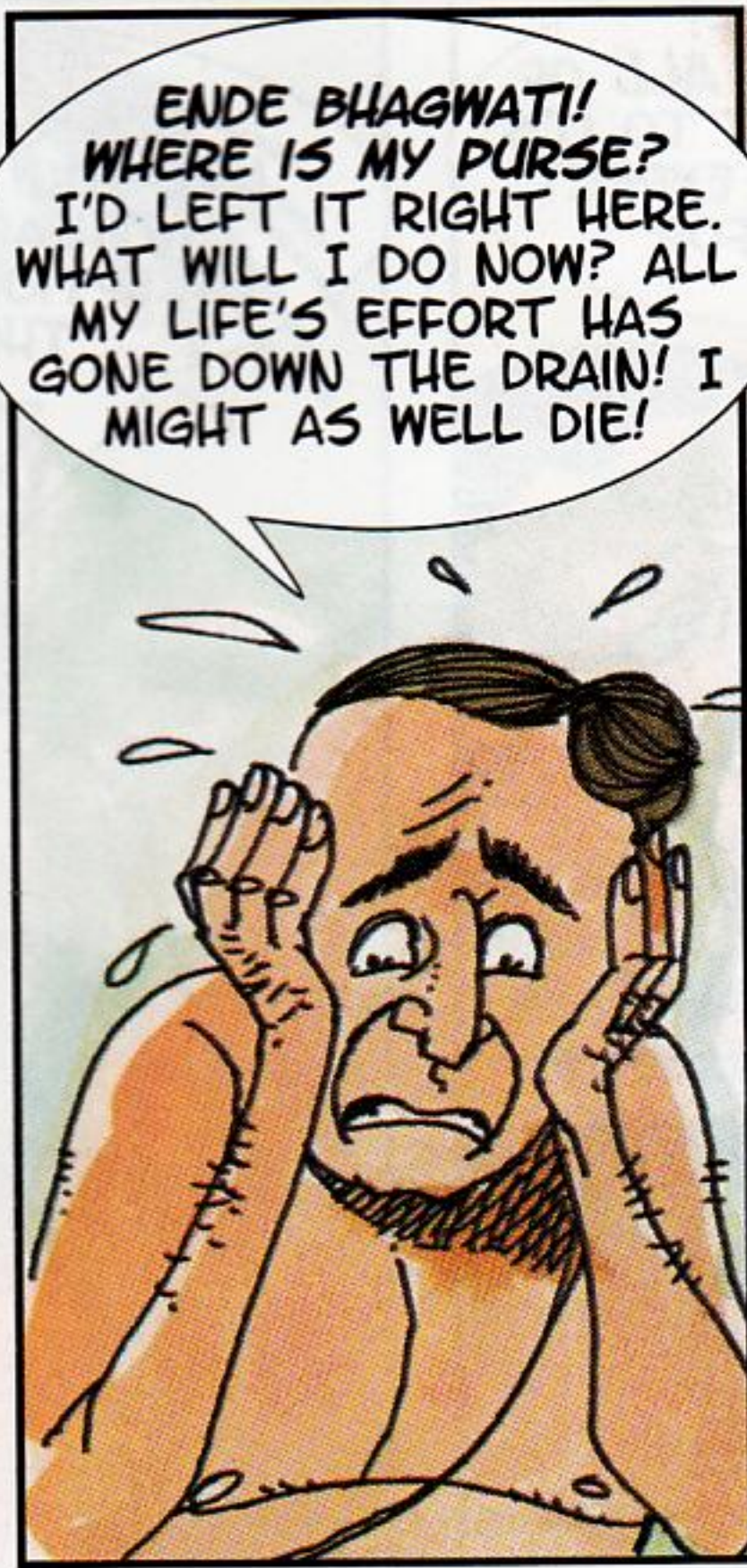
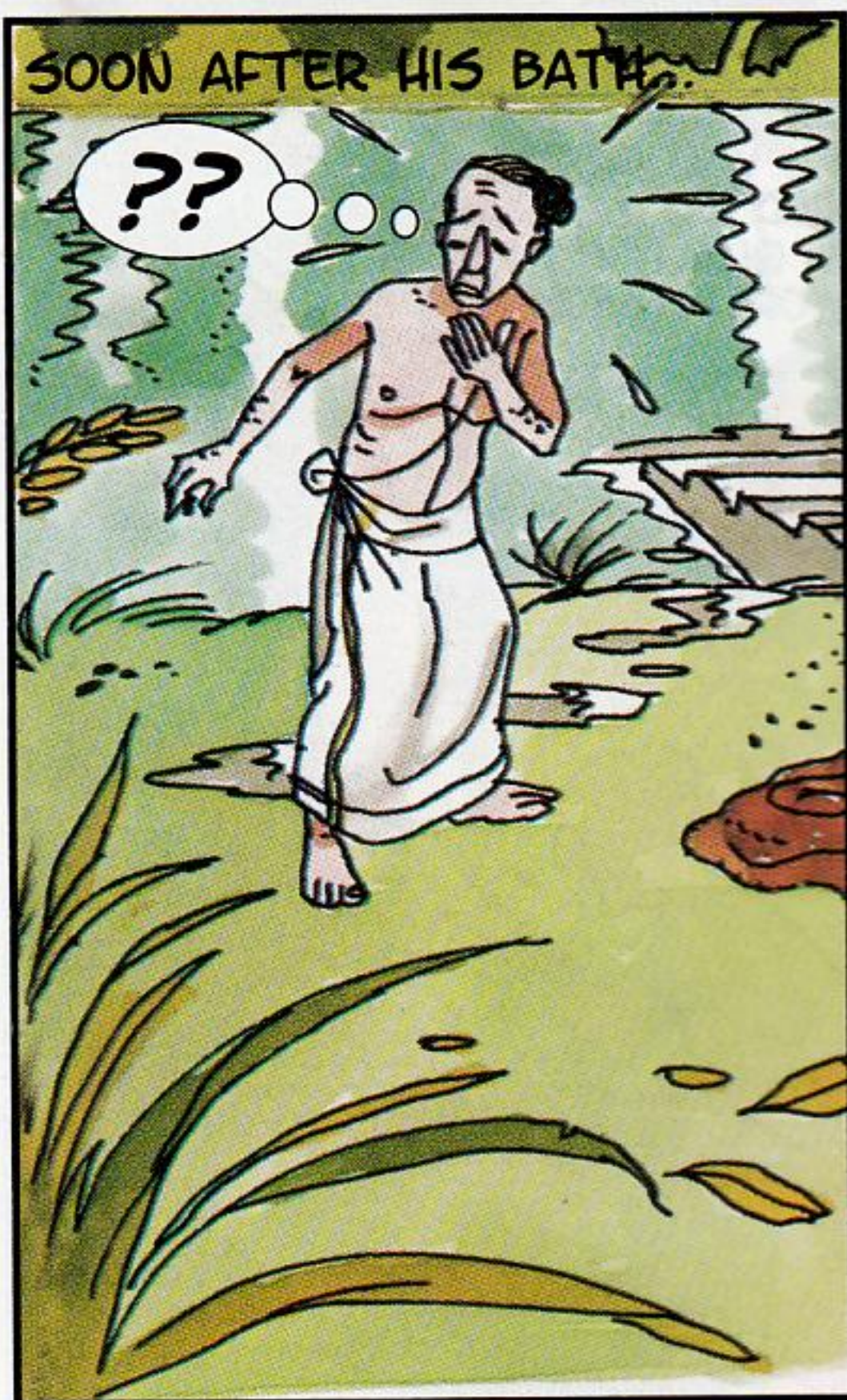




OH DEAR! YOU LOOK EXHAUSTED AND HUNGRY. THE WORSHIP IS OVER, BUT I'LL STILL GIVE YOU SOME LUNCH. WHY DON'T YOU GO DOWN TO THE POND, TAKE A QUICK BATH AND JOIN ME?







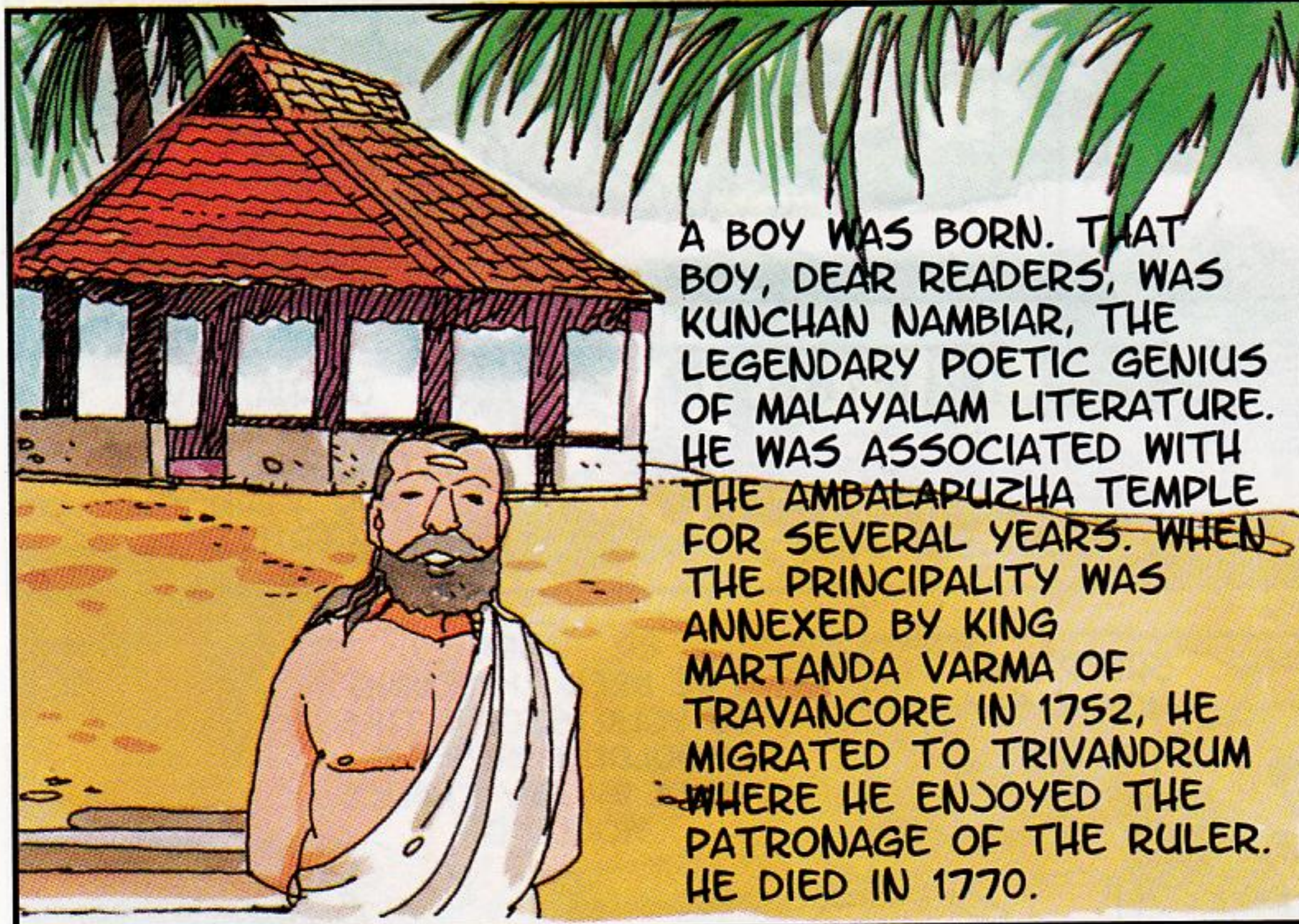
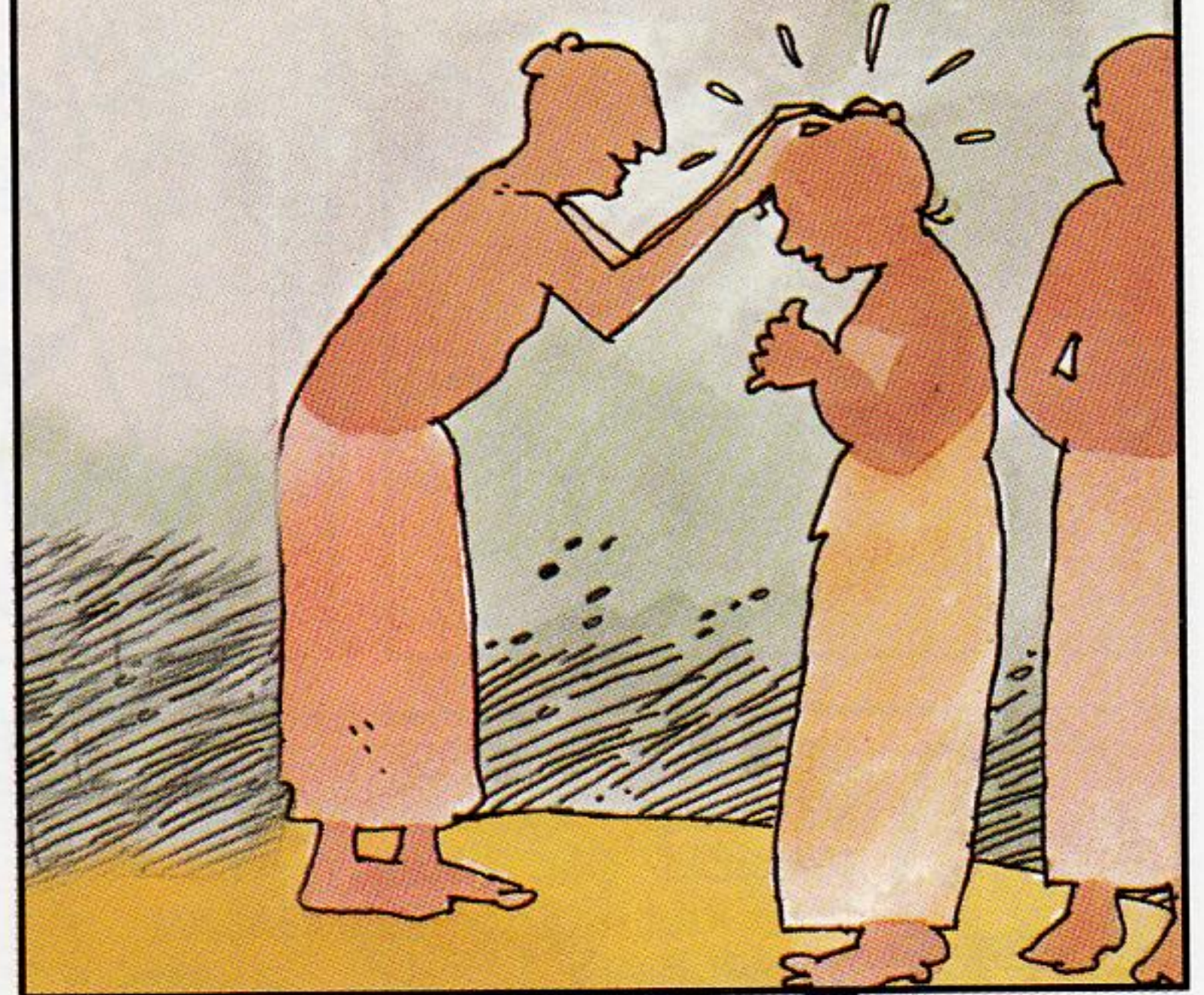


CHECHI,  
WHAT CAN I SAY? I'M  
OVERWHELMED! PLEASE KEEP HALF  
THE MONEY IN THE PURSE FOR  
YOURSELF.

WHY JUST HALF?  
I COULD HAVE KEPT ALL OF  
IT. I HAD TO GIVE IT TO ITS  
OWNER. HOW CAN I EXPECT  
ANY RETURNS FOR  
THAT?



GOOD LADY,  
IT'S RARE TO FIND PEOPLE  
LIKE YOU! MAY YOU BE BLESSED  
WITH A CHILD OF RARE AND  
EXCEPTIONAL QUALITIES KNOWN  
THE WORLD OVER!



A BOY WAS BORN. THAT  
BOY, DEAR READERS, WAS  
KUNCHAN NAMBIAR, THE  
LEGENDARY POETIC GENIUS  
OF MALAYALAM LITERATURE.  
HE WAS ASSOCIATED WITH  
THE AMBALAPUZHA TEMPLE  
FOR SEVERAL YEARS. WHEN  
THE PRINCIPALITY WAS  
ANNEXED BY KING  
MARTANDA VARMA OF  
TRAVANCORE IN 1752, HE  
MIGRATED TO TRIVANDRUM  
WHERE HE ENJOYED THE  
PATRONAGE OF THE RULER.  
HE DIED IN 1770.

MY  
STOOGES...



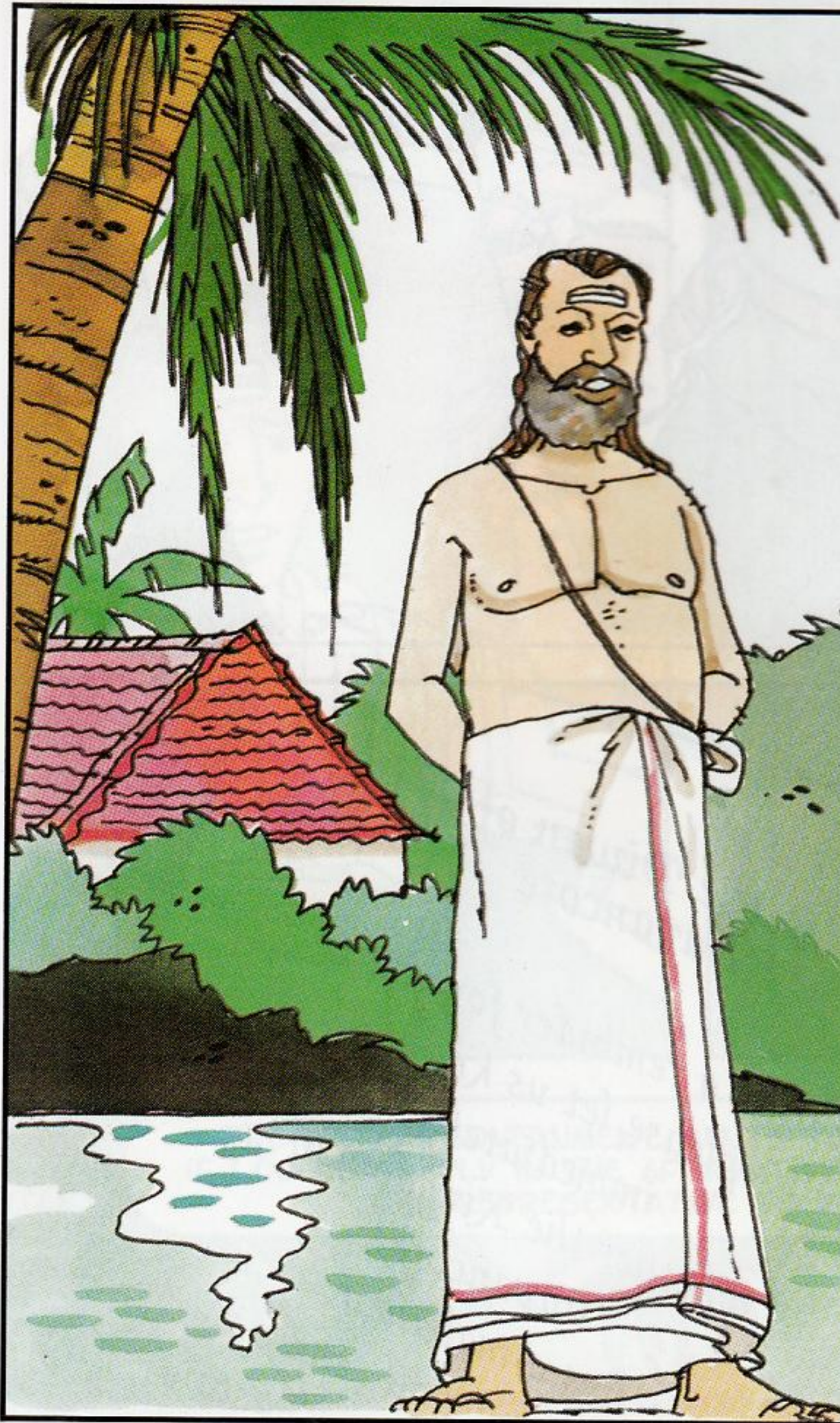
*My stooges, after all,  
cannot tolerate hunger.  
Well before dawn,  
they devour thick rice broth.  
They mix thick curd in the rice,  
and eat five large servings everyday!  
Chewing and filling their mouth  
with betel leaves  
They set out in great mirth towards  
the homes of lovely damsels.  
After their fun, they turn around  
Gossip about them and  
laugh at them...  
Even if dead, they will be seen  
at dinner time. It is disgusting!!<sup>3</sup>*

SO, WHAT I CREATED WAS A DANCE DRAMA CALLED OTTAM THULLAL THAT HARVESTED THE WIT OF THE CHAKIAR KOOOTHU AND BLENDED IT INTO MOVEMENTS FROM KATHAKALI. I HEAR IT'S VERY POPULAR EVEN TODAY. SINCE I DID NOT USE SANSKRIT, MANY ORDINARY PEOPLE CAME TO WATCH MY THULLALS. YOU CAN SAY I WAS A SATIRIST. I UNLEASHED MY MERCILESS CRITICISM AND POKED FUN AT ALL COMMUNITIES—TAMIL BRAHMINS, NAMBOODIRIS, NAIRS, COURTIER, COURTESANS AND SOLDIERS. KINGS AND NOBLEMEN WERE NOT SPARED EITHER! YOU KNOW WHAT, I HAD GREAT FUN! NEXT TIME THERE'S AN OTTAM THULLAL PERFORMANCE, I HOPE YOU'LL MAKE AN EFFORT TO GO! AND...OH, PLEASE REMEMBER ME!

THE END

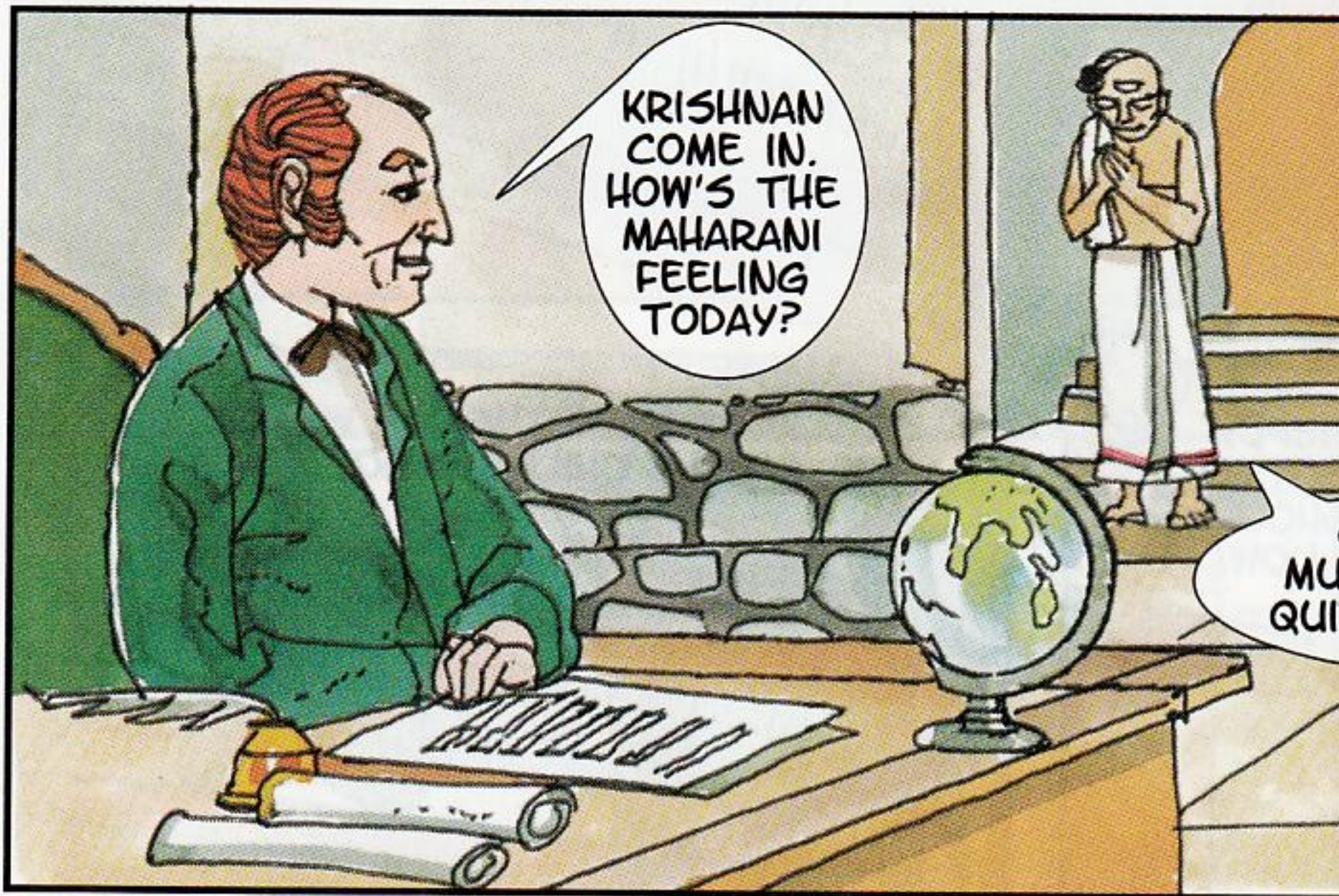


# FAITH OF A EUROPEAN



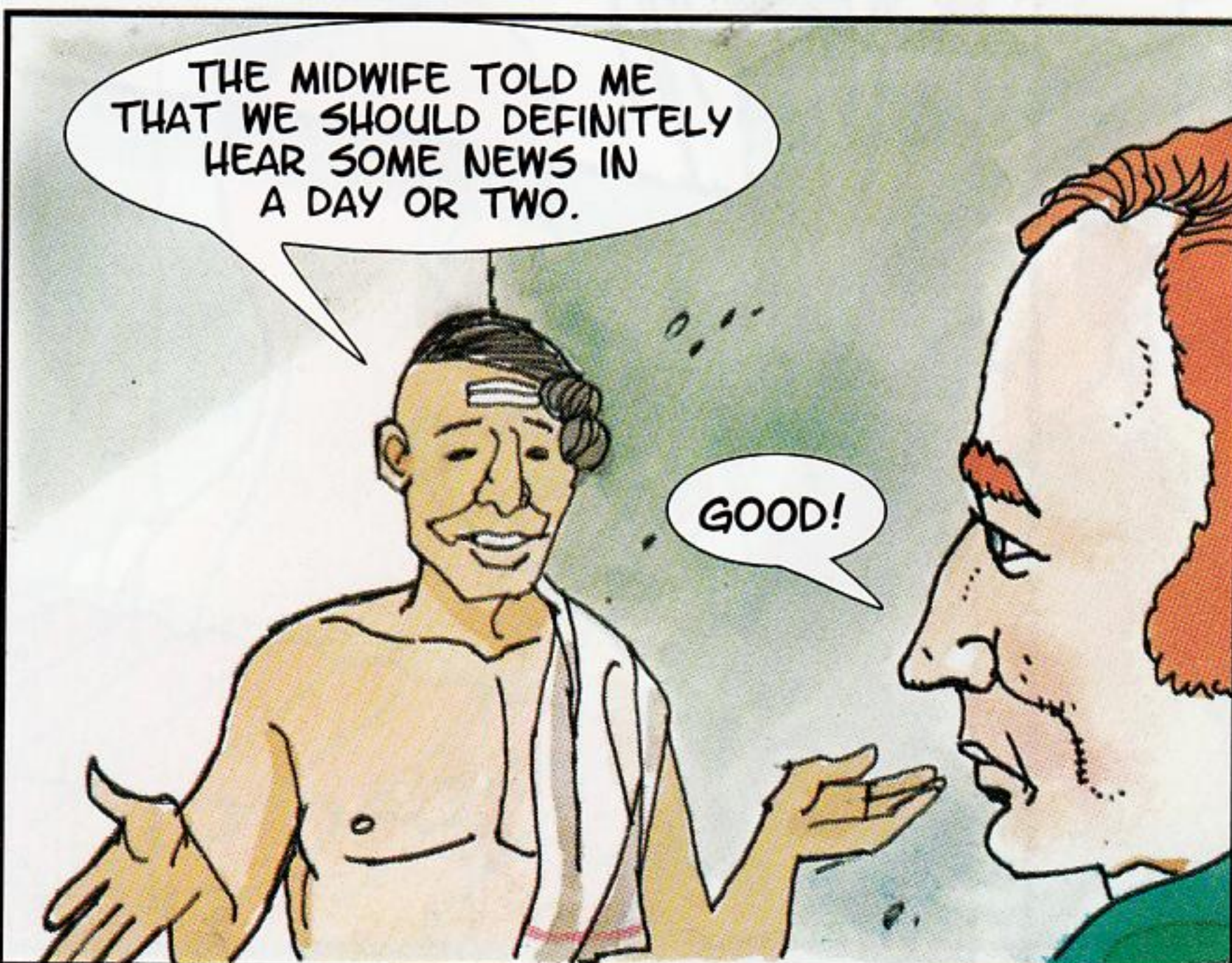
NOW THAT YOU'VE HEARD KUNCHAN NAMBIAR'S STORY LET ME ALSO TELL YOU A TALE ABOUT THE RATHER UNUSUAL CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE BIRTH OF TRAVANCORE'S MOST ILLUSTRIOUS KING, SWATI TIRUNAL RAMAVARMA MAHARAJA.

AROUND THE MALAYALAM YEAR 1986, MAHARAJA BALARAMAVARMA PASSED AWAY. SINCE THERE WERE NO MALE ISSUES TO CARRY ON THE ROYAL LINEAGE IN TRAVANCORE AT THAT TIME, THE RULING BRITISH GOVERNMENT DECREED THAT THE LAND BE RULED BY THE SENIOR MOST LADY OF THE ROYAL FAMILY, MAHARANI LAKSHMI.



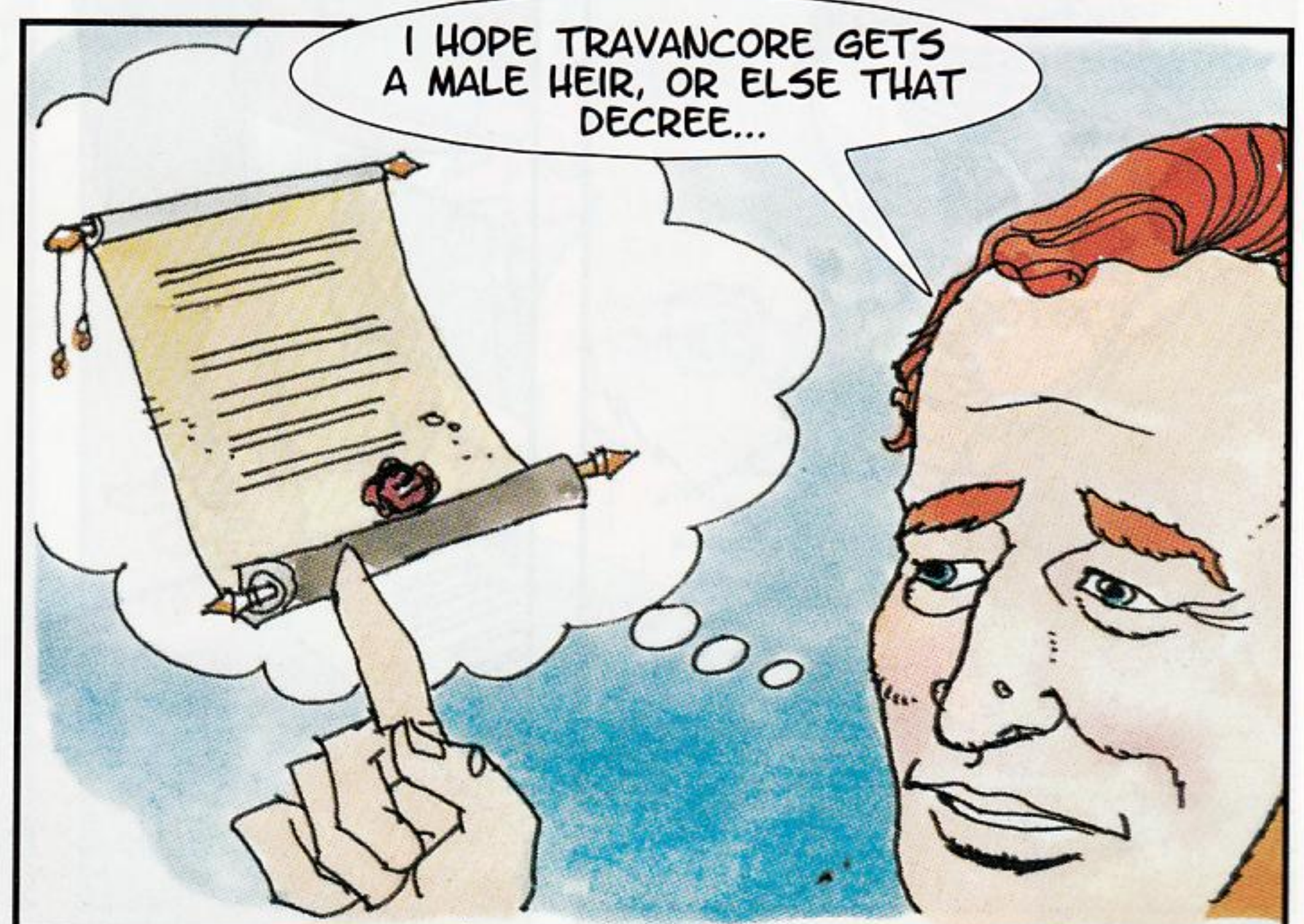
KRISHNAN COME IN. HOW'S THE MAHARANI FEELING TODAY?

CHEERFUL!,  
MUNROE SAIPU<sup>1</sup>,  
QUITE CHEERFUL!



THE MIDWIFE TOLD ME THAT WE SHOULD DEFINITELY HEAR SOME NEWS IN A DAY OR TWO.

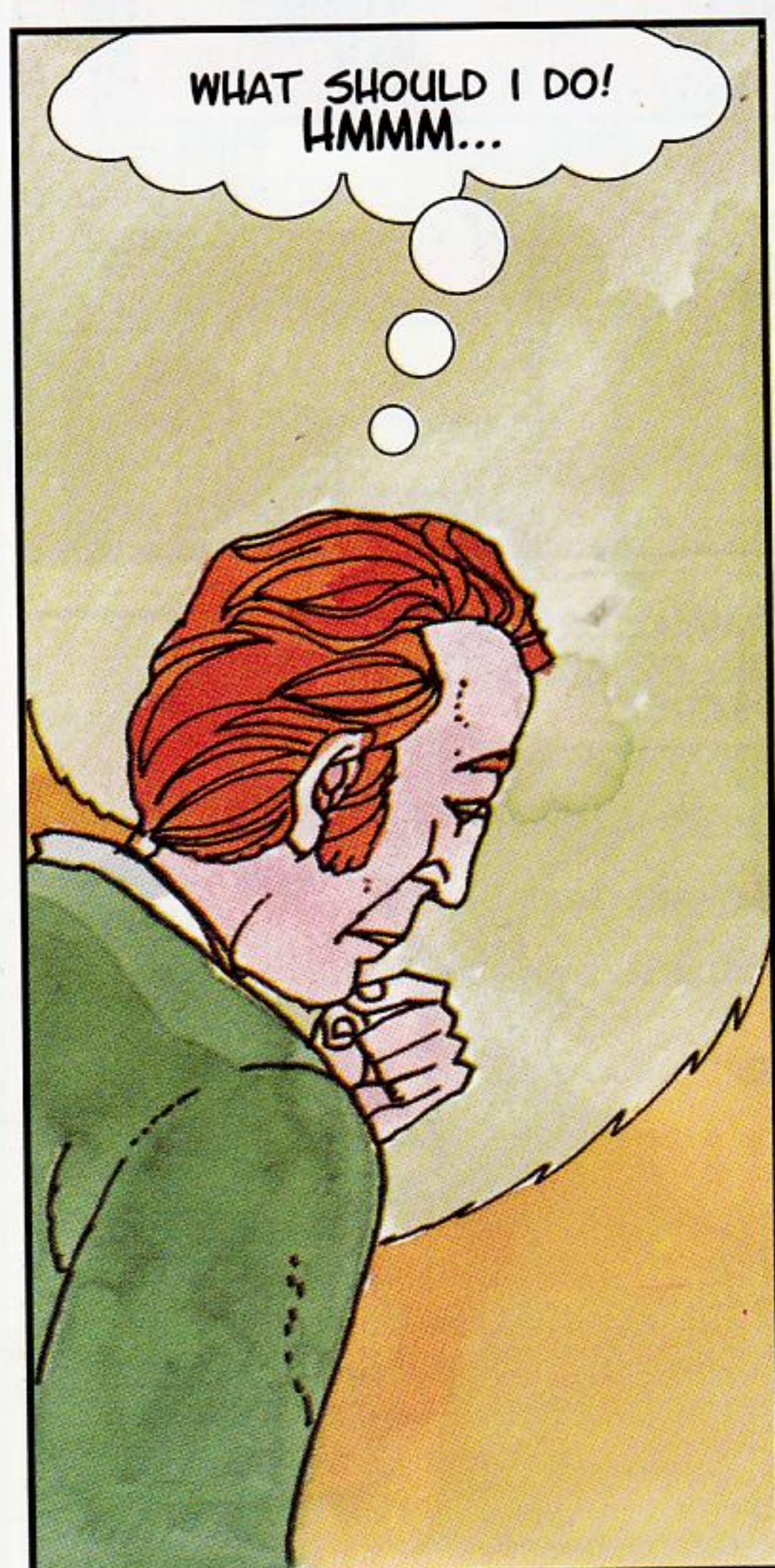
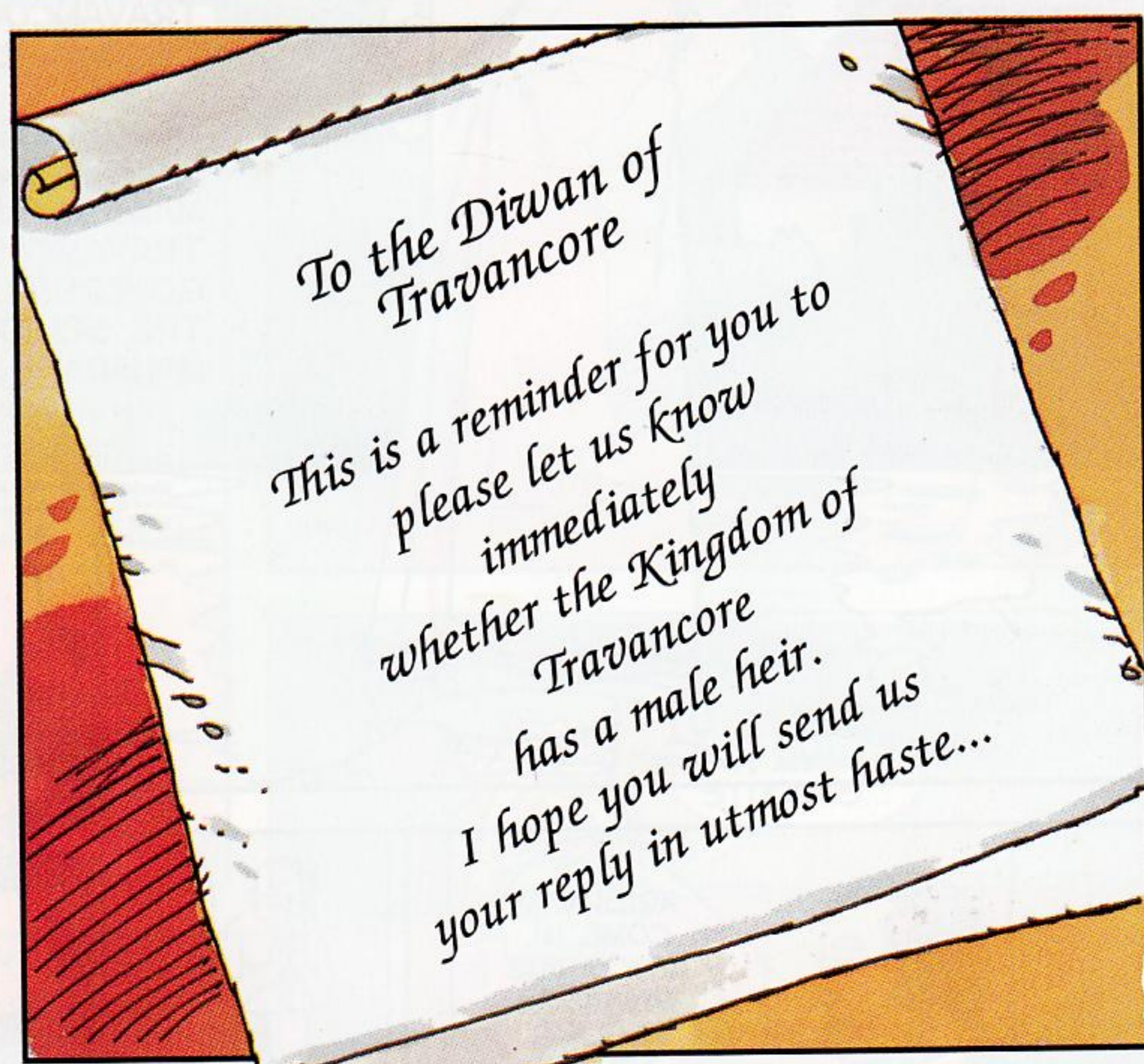
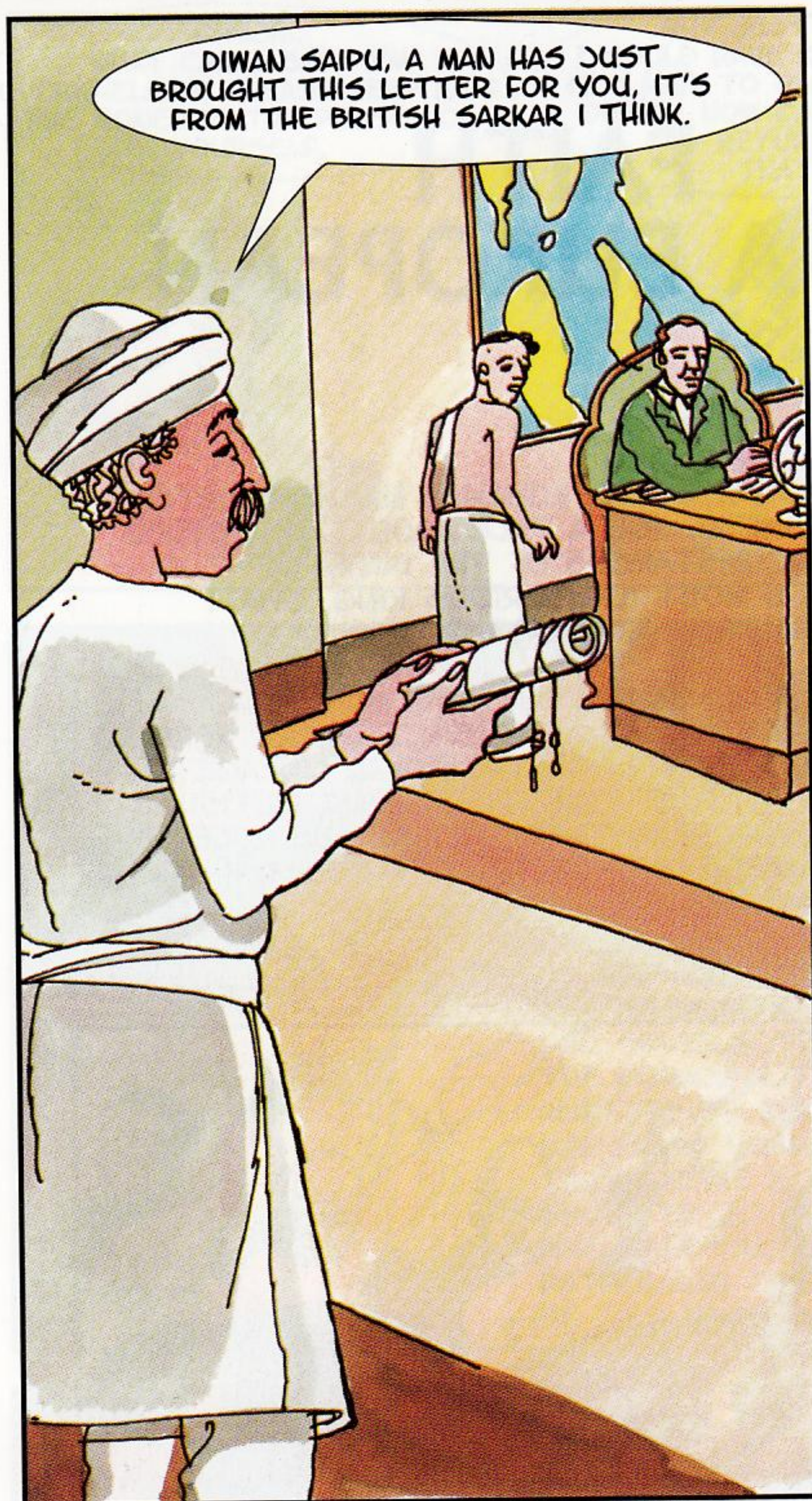
GOOD!



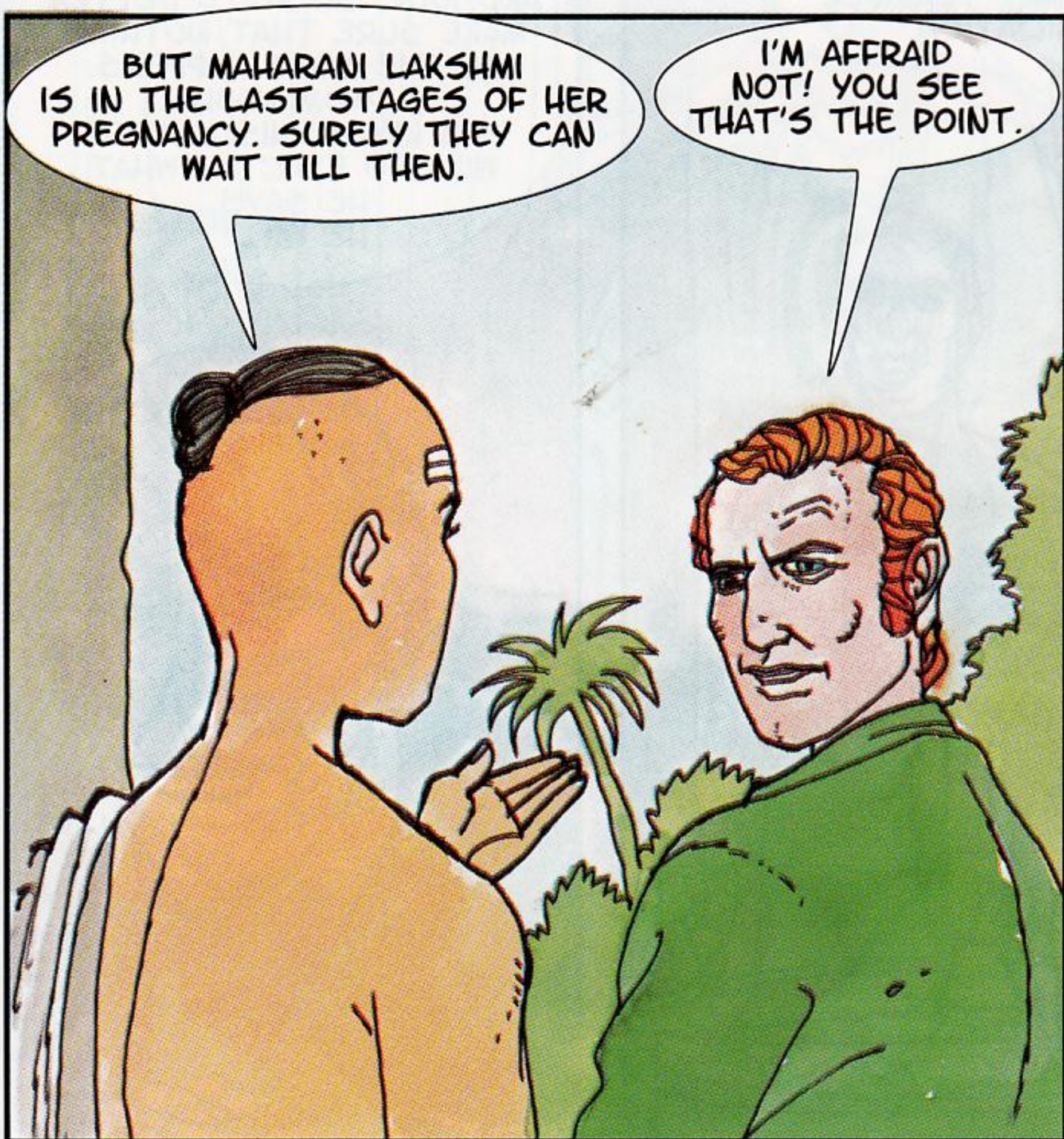
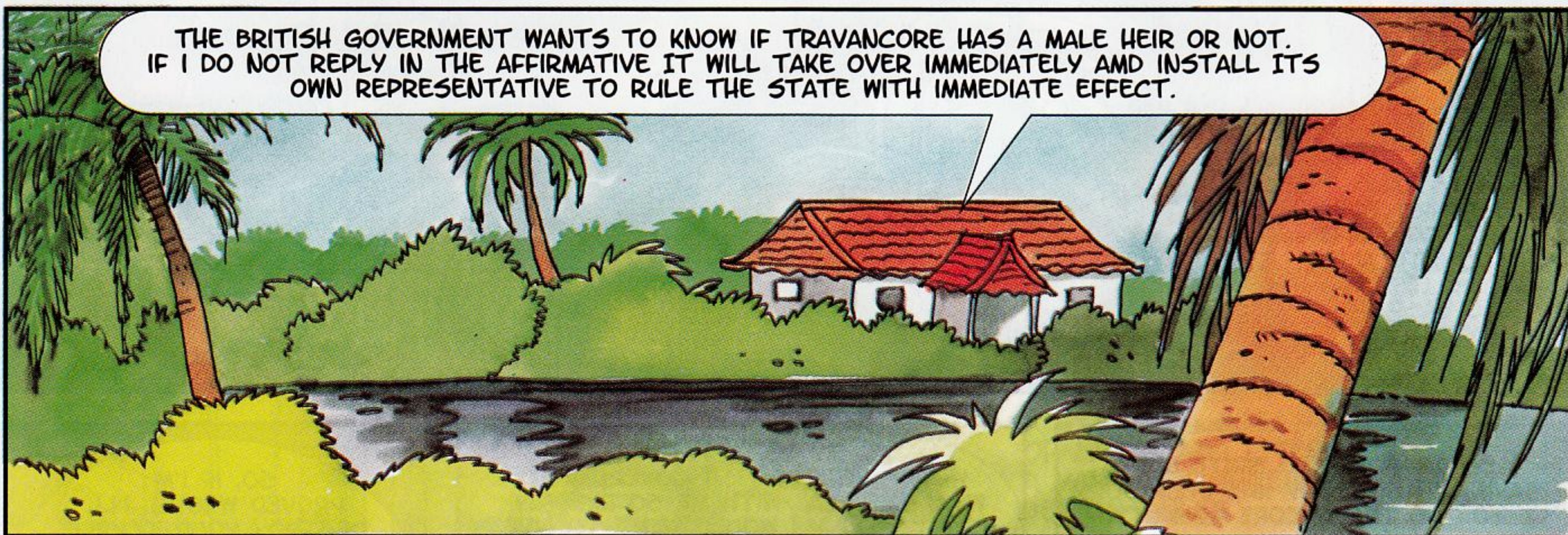
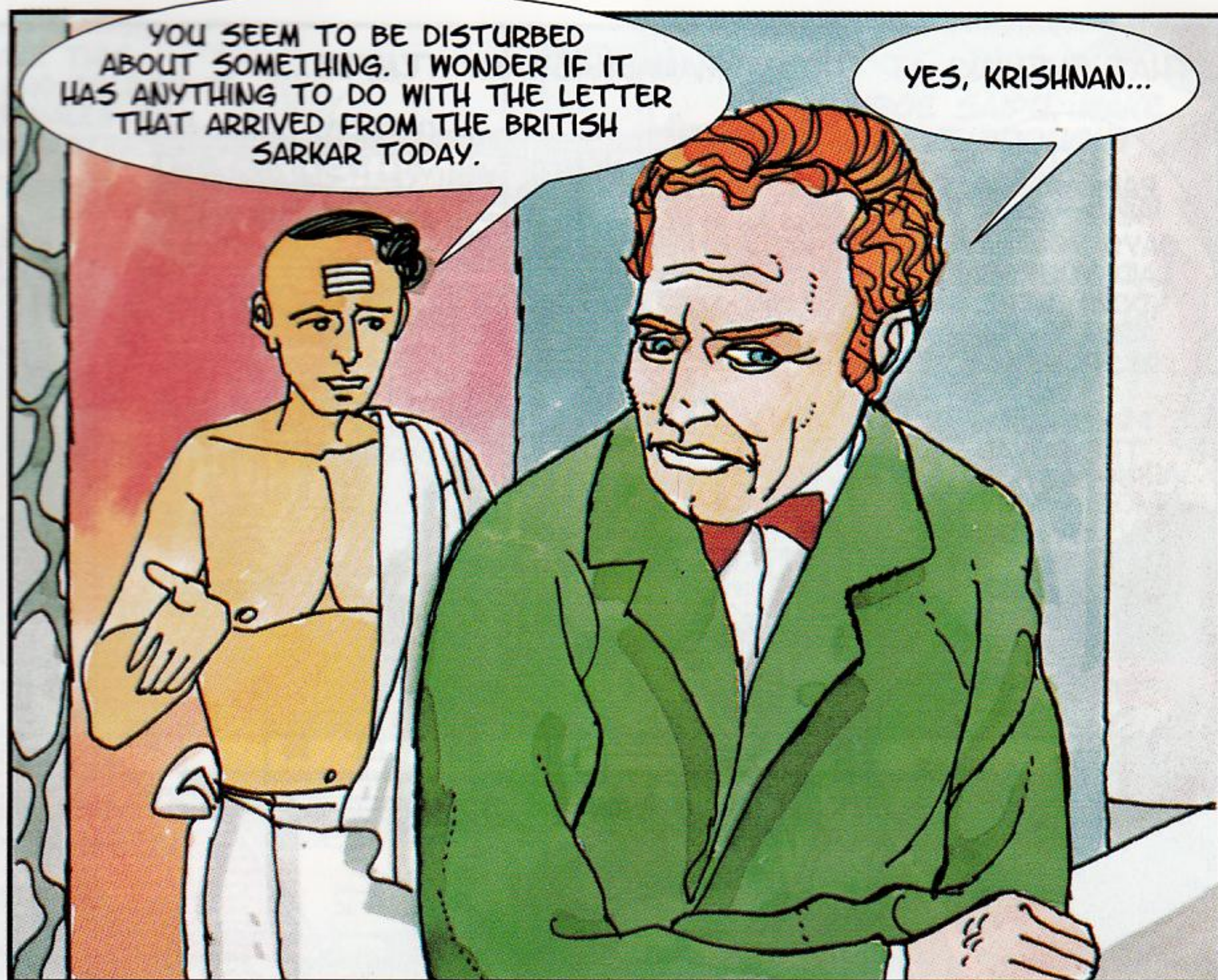
I HOPE TRAVANCORE GETS A MALE HEIR, OR ELSE THAT DECREE...

1. Malayali term for white man











THAT EVENING AT THE PADMANABHASWAMY TEMPLE...

O  
PADMANABHA,  
EVERYONE  
SAYS YOU HAVE  
LAID YOURSELF  
DOWN HERE.  
AREN'T YOU  
RESPONSIBLE  
FOR  
PRESERVING  
THE ROYAL  
DYNASTY?

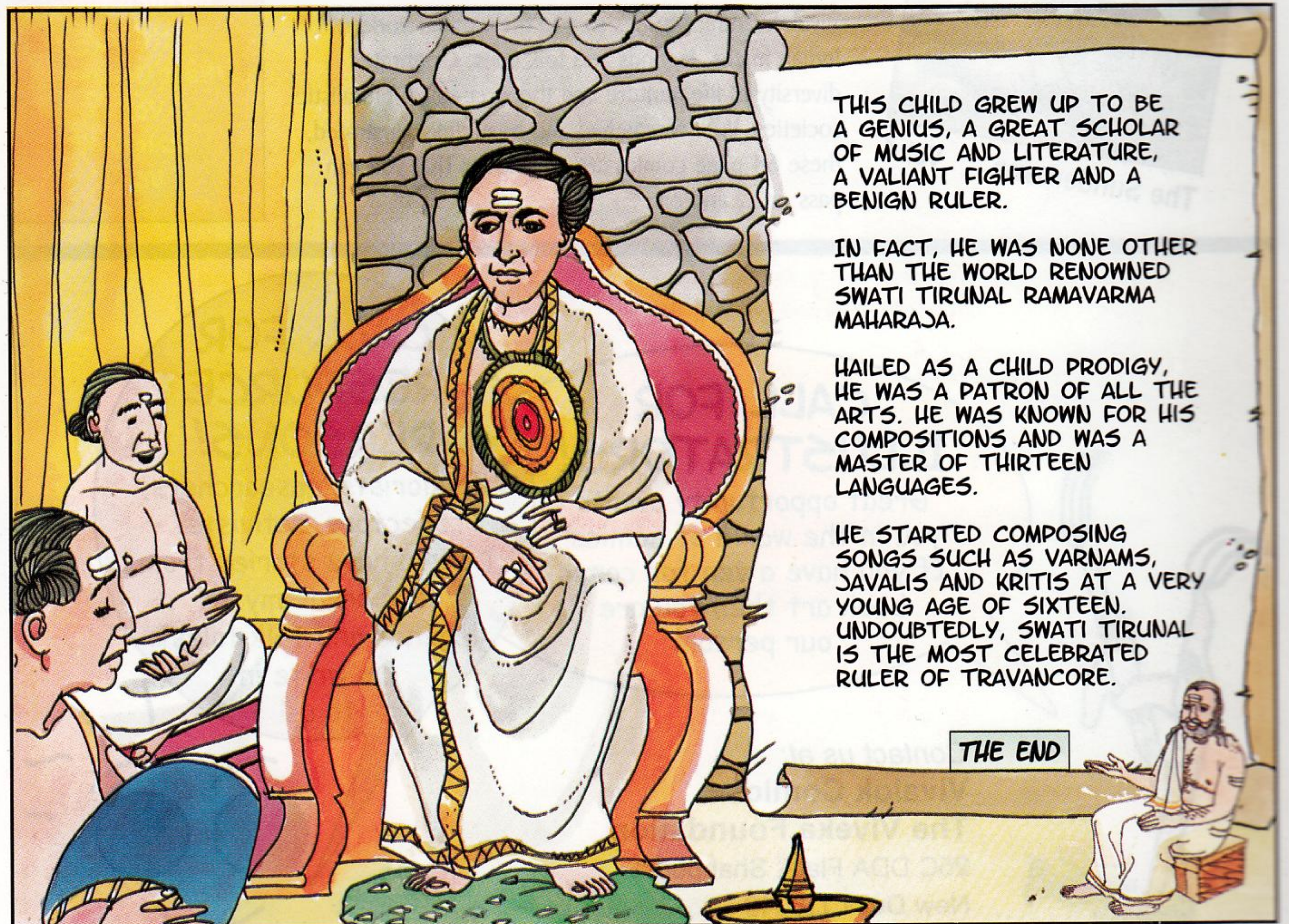
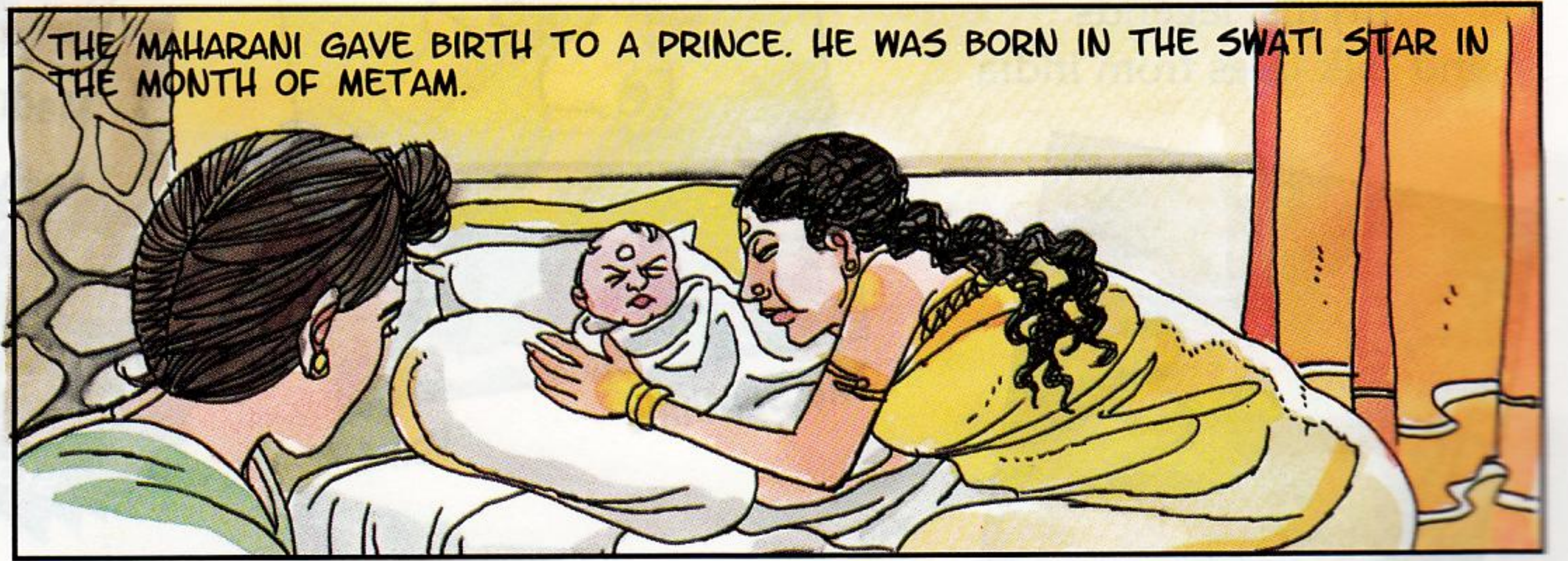
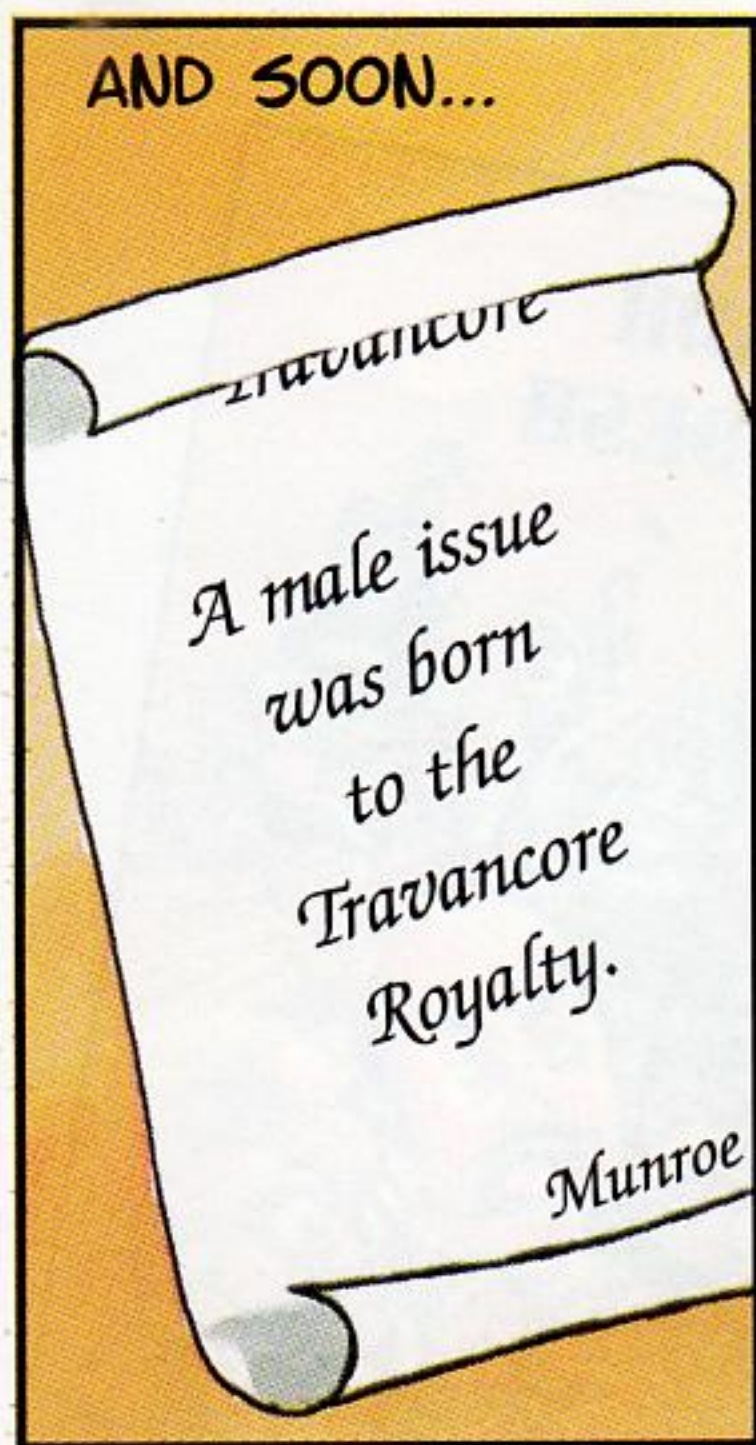
THIS LAND  
IS YOURS TOO,  
IS IT NOT? IF IT  
FALLS INTO ALIEN  
HANDS IT'S NOT  
SO EASY TO  
CLAIM IT  
BACK.

SO I'M GOING TO WRITE BACK  
SAYING THAT A BOY HAS BEEN BORN  
TO THE TRAVANCORE ROYALTY.

IF MY REPLY PROVES  
WRONG, THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT  
WILL NOT DEAL WITH ME SO LIGHTLY.  
I DON'T THINK I WOULD WANT TO LIVE  
AFTER THAT TERRIBLE  
HUMILIATION.

SO, IF I'M  
PROVED WRONG, I'LL  
DESTROY YOUR TEMPLE  
AND IDOL. SO YOU'D BETTER  
MAKE SURE THAT NOTHING  
OF THE SORT HAPPENS.  
O PADMANABHA,  
YOU KNOW THIS MUNROE  
WILL DO EXACTLY WHAT  
HE SAYS  
HE WILL!





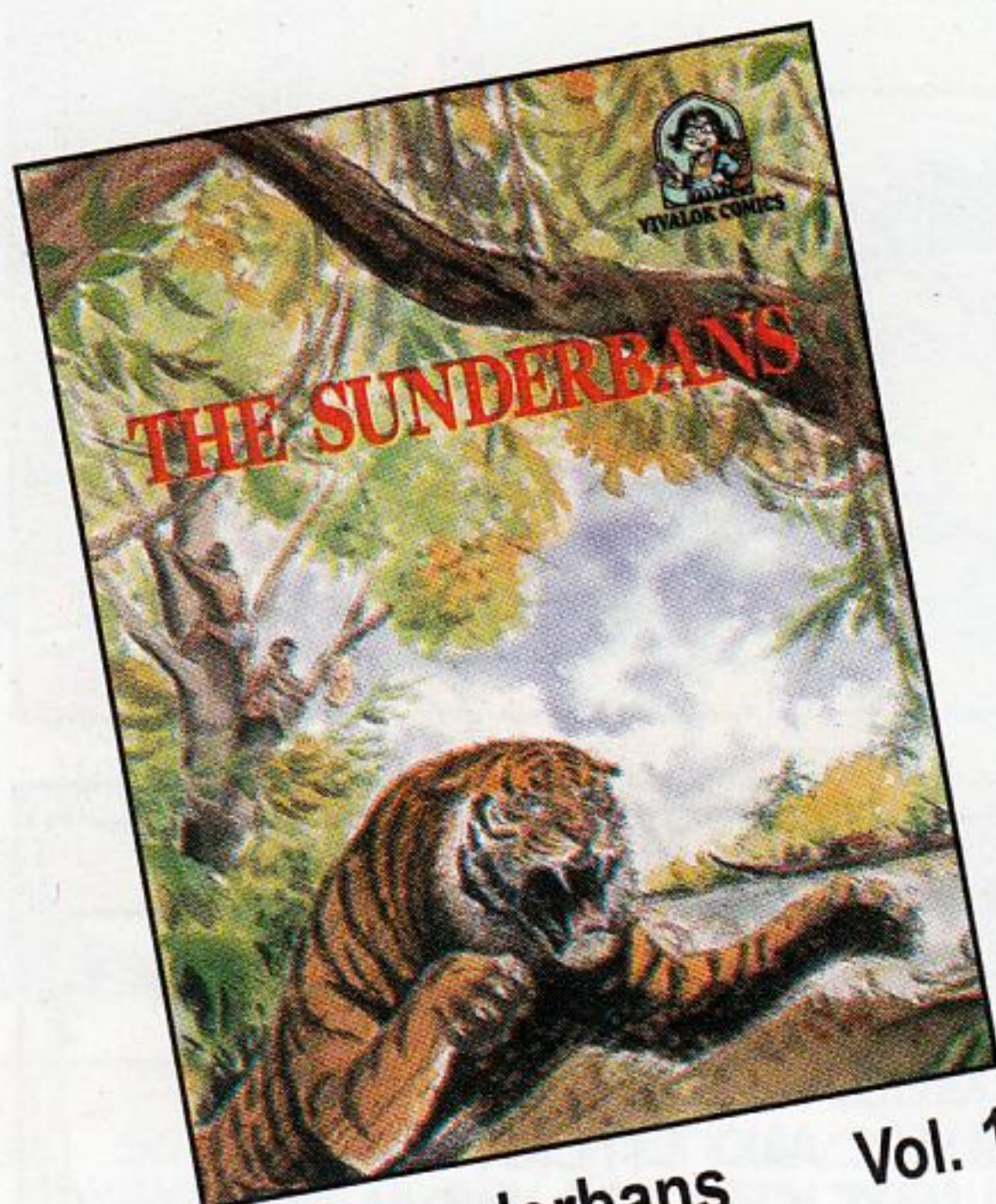


COMICS FOR  
GENERATIONS!

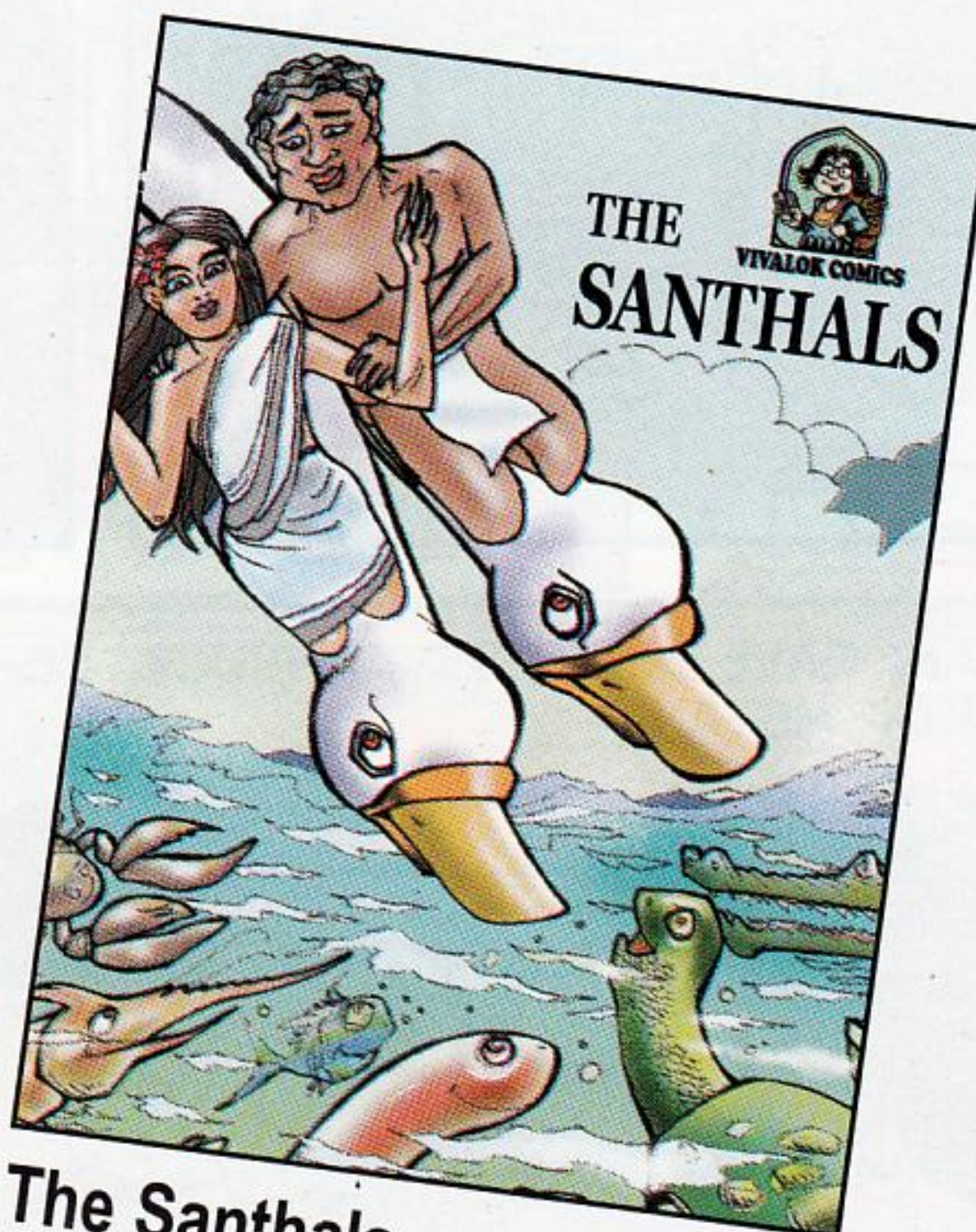


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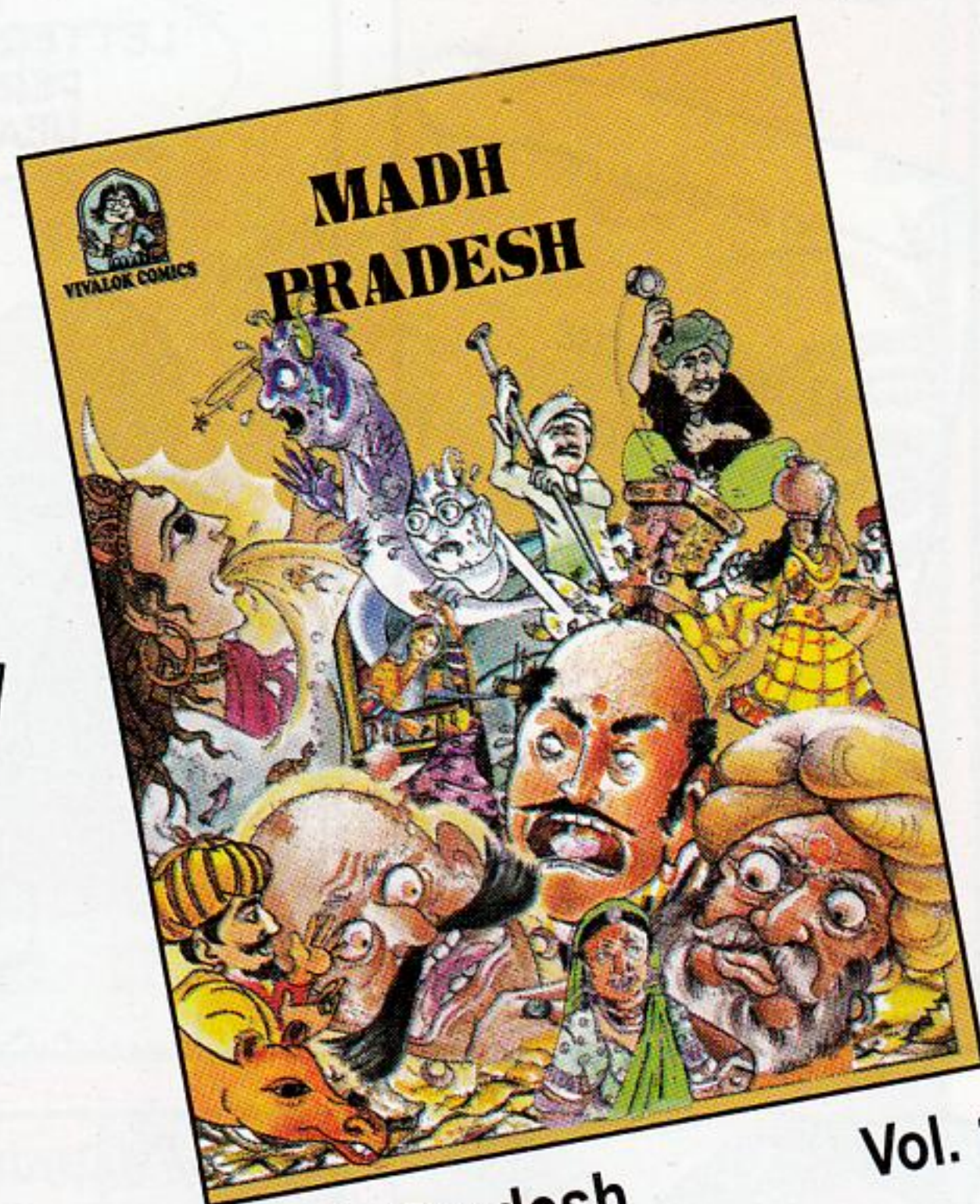
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